

FORETASTES OF THE HEAVENLY LIFE

NO. 2607

A SERMON
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(C. H. SPURGEON MEMORIAL SABBATH).
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AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
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“And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which the Lord our God does give us.”
Deuteronomy 1:25.

You remember the occasion concerning which these words were written. The children of Israel sent 12 men as spies into the land of Canaan and they brought back with them the fruit of the land, among which was a bunch of grapes from Eshcol too heavy to be borne by one man, and which, therefore, two of them carried on a staff between them. I shall not say much, at this time, concerning the Israelites, but I want to show you that as they learned something of what Canaan was like by the fruit of the land brought to them by the spies, so you and I, even while we are on earth, if we are the Lord's chosen people, may learn something of what Heaven is—the state to which we are to attain hereafter—by certain blessings which are brought to us even while we are here.

The Israelites were sure that Canaan was a fertile land when they saw the fruit of it which was brought by their brothers and when they ate some. Perhaps there was but little for so many and yet those who did eat were made at once to understand that it must have been a goodly soil that produced such fruit. In like manner, Beloved, we who love the Lord Jesus Christ have had clusters of the grapes of a better Eshcol—we have had some of the fruits of Heaven even while we have been on earth and by them we are able to judge of the richness of the soil of Paradise which brings forth such rare and choice delights.

I shall, therefore, present to you a series of views of Heaven in order to give you some idea how it is that the Christian on earth enjoys a fore-taste of the blessings that are yet to be revealed. Possibly there are scarcely two Christians who have exactly the same ideas concerning Heaven, though they all expect the same Heaven, yet the most prominent feature in it is different to each mind according to its constitution.

I. Now, I will confess to you what is, to me, the most prominent feature of Heaven, judging at the present moment. At another time, I may

love Heaven better for another thing, but, just lately, I have learned to love Heaven as A PLACE OF SECURITY.

We have been greatly saddened as we have seen some professors dishonoring their profession—yes, and worse, still, some of the Lord's own beloved committing grievous faults and slips which have brought disgrace upon their character and injury to their souls. And we have learned to look up to Heaven as a place where we shall never, never sin—where our feet shall be fixed firmly upon the Rock—where there is neither tripping nor slipping—where faults shall be unknown—where we shall have no need to keep watch against an indefatigable enemy because there is no foe that shall annoy us—where we shall not be on our guard day or night watching against the incursion of foes, for, “there the wicked cease from troubling and there the weary are at rest.” We have looked upon Heaven as the land of complete security, where the garment shall be always white, where the face shall be always anointed with fresh oil, where there is no fear of our turning away from our Lord, for there we shall stand fast forever! And I ask you, if that is a true view of Heaven—and I am sure it is one feature of it—do not the saints, even on earth, in this sense, enjoy some fruits of Paradise? Do we not, even in these huts and villages below, sometimes taste the joys of blissful security? The Doctrine of God's Word is that all who are in union with the Lamb are safe, that all Believers must hold on their way, that those who have committed their souls to the keeping of Christ shall find Him a faithful and Immutable Keeper. Believing this Doctrine, we enjoy security even on earth—not that high and glorious security which renders us free from every slip and trip, but, nevertheless, a security well-nigh as great because it secures us against ultimate ruin and renders us certain that we shall attain to eternal happiness!

And, Beloved, have you ever sat down and reflected on the Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints? I am sure you have and God has brought home to you a sense of your security in the Person of Christ. He has told you that your name is engraved on His hand. He has whispered in your ear the promise, “Fear you not, for I am with you.” You have been led to look upon the great Surety of the Covenant as faithful and true and, therefore, bound and engaged to present you, the weakest of the family, with all the chosen race, before the Throne of God! And in such a sweet contemplation I am sure you have been drinking some of the juice of His spiced pomegranates, you have had some of the choice fruits of Paradise, you have had some of the enjoyments which the perfect saints above have in a sense of your complete and eternal security in Christ Jesus. Oh, how I love that Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints! I shall at once renounce the pulpit when I cannot preach it, for any other form of teaching seems to me to be a black desert and a howling wilderness, as unworthy of God as it would be beneath even my acceptance, frail worm as I am! I could never either believe or preach a Gospel which saves me today and rejects me tomorrow—a Gospel which puts me in Christ's fam-

ily one hour, and makes me a child of the devil the next—a Gospel which first justifies and then condemns me—a Gospel which pardons me and afterwards casts me down to Hell. Such a Gospel is abhorrent to reason, itself! Much more is it contrary to the mind of the God whom we delight to serve. Every true Believer in Jesus can sing, with Toplady—

***“My name from the palms of His hand
Eternity will not erase!
Impressed on His heart it remains
In marks of indelible Grace.
Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given,
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in Heaven.”***

Yes, Beloved, we enjoy a sense of perfect security even as we dwell in this land of wars and fighting. As the spies brought to their brethren in the wilderness bunches of the grapes of Canaan, so, in the security we enjoy, we have a foretaste and earnest of the bliss of Paradise!

II. In the next place, most probably the greater part of you love to think of Heaven under another aspect, as A PLACE OF PERFECT REST.

Son of toil, you love the sanctuary because it is there you sit to hear God’s Word and rest your wearied limbs. When you have wiped the hot sweat from your burning brow, you have often thought of Heaven as the place where your labors shall be over and you have sung with sweet emphasis—

***“There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble will roll
Across my peaceful breast.”***

Rest, rest, rest—this is what you need—and to me, also, this idea of Heaven is exceedingly beautiful. Rest I know I never shall have beneath this sky while Christ’s servants continue to be so unreasonable as they are. I have served them to the utmost of my power, yet I am well-nigh hounded to my grave by Christian ministers perpetually wanting me to do impossibilities that they know no mortal strength can accomplish! Willing am I to labor till I drop, but I cannot do more than I am doing. Yet I am perpetually assailed on this side and the other, till, go where I may, there seems no rest for me till I slumber in my grave—and I look forward to Heaven, with great happiness, because there I shall rest from labors constant and arduous, though much loved.

And you, too, dear Christian Friends who have been toiling long to gain an object you have eagerly sought—you will be glad when you get to Heaven. You have said that if you could attain your desire, you would gladly lie down and rest. You have longed to lay up a certain amount of riches. You have said that if you could once gain a pension, you would then make yourself at ease. Or you have been laboring long to secure a certain position and you have said that if you could only reach it, you would rest. Yes, but you have not reached it yet—and you love to think of

Heaven because it is the goal to the racer, the target of the arrow of existence, the couch of repose for time's tired toilers! Yes, an eternal rest for the poor weary struggler upon earth. You love it because it is a place of rest—and do we ever enjoy a foretaste of Heaven upon earth in that sense? Oh, yes, Beloved! Blessed be God, “we who have believed do enter into rest.” Our peace is like a river and our righteousness like the waves of the sea. God does give rest to His people even here—“there remains, therefore, a rest to the people of God.” We have stormy trials and bitter troubles in the world, but we have learned to say, “Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.” Did you ever, in times of great distress, climb up to your closet and there, on your knees, pour out your heart before God? Did you ever feel, after you had so done, that you had, as it were, bathed yourself in rest, so that—

**“Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall,”**

you cared not one whit for them? Though wars and tumults were raging around you, you were kept in perfect peace, for you had found a great protecting shield in Christ. You were able to remain restful and calm, for you had looked upon the face of God's Anointed!

Ah, Christian, that rest, so placid and serene, without a billow of disturbance, which in your deepest troubles you have been enabled to enjoy upon the bosom of Christ, is to you like a bunch from the vintage of Heaven, one grape of the heavenly cluster of which you shall soon partake in the land of the hereafter! Thus, again, you see, we can have a foretaste of Heaven and realize what it is even while we are here upon earth.

III. That idea of Heaven as a place of rest will just suit some indolent professors, so I will turn the subject around and show you that the very opposite idea is also true, and may be more useful to certain people. I believe that one of the worst sins of which a man can be guilty is to be idle. I could almost forgive a drunk, rather than a lazy man. He who is idle has as good reason to be penitent before God as David had when he was an adulterer. Indeed, David's adultery probably resulted from his idleness. It is an abominable thing to let the grass grow up to your knees and do nothing towards making it into hay. God never sent a man into the world to be idle—but there are some who make a profession of being Christians who do nothing to serve the Lord from one year's end to the other.

A true idea of Heaven is that it is A PLACE OF UNINTERRUPTED SERVICE. It is a land where they serve God day and night in His Temple and never know weariness, and never require slumber. Do you know, dear Friends, the deliciousness of work? Although I must complain when people expect impossibilities of me, it is the highest enjoyment of my life to be busily engaged for Christ. Tell me the day when I do not preach—I will tell you the day in which I am not happy! And the day in which it is my privilege to preach the Gospel and labor for God is generally the day

of my peaceful and quiet enjoyment after all. Service is delight! Praising God is pleasure. Laboring for Him is the highest bliss a mortal can know. Oh, how sweet it must be to sing His praises and never feel that the throat is dry! Oh, how blessed to flap the wings forever and never feel them tire! Oh, what sweet enjoyment to fly upon His errands forevermore, to circle round the Throne of God in Heaven while eternity shall last and never once lay the head on the pillow, never once feel the throbbing of fatigue, never once the pangs that admonish us that we need to cease, but to keep on forever like eternity's own self—a broad river rolling on with perpetual floods of labor! Oh, that must be enjoyment! That must be Heaven, to serve God day and night in His Temple! Many of you have served God on earth and have had foretastes of that bliss.

I wish some of you knew more of the sweets of labor, for although labor breeds sweat, it breeds sweets, too—more especially labor for Christ. There is a satisfaction *before* the work. There is a satisfaction *in* the work. There is a satisfaction *after* the work and there is a satisfaction in looking for the fruits of the work! And a great satisfaction when we get the fruits! Labor for Christ is, indeed, the dressing room of Heaven. If it is not Heaven, itself, it is one of the most blissful foretastes of it. Thank God, Christian, if you can do anything for your Master! Thank Him if it is your privilege to do the least thing for Him! But remember, in so doing, He is giving you a taste of the grapes of Eshcol! But you lazy people do not get the grapes of Eshcol because you are too lazy to carry the big bunches. You would like them to come into your mouths without the trouble of gathering them! You do not care to go forth and serve God. You sit still and look after yourselves, but what do you do for other people? You go to your place of worship—you talk about your Sunday school and Sick Visitation Society, yet you never teach in the Sunday school and you never visit a sick person—you take a great deal of credit to yourself while you do nothing at all! You cannot expect to know much of the enjoyments of heavenly Glory until you have experienced a little of the delight of working in the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

IV. Another view of Heaven is that it is A PLACE OF COMPLETE VICTORY AND GLORIOUS TRIUMPH. This is the battlefield—there is the triumphal procession. This is the land of the sword and the spear—there is the land of the wreath and the crown. This is the land of the garment rolled in blood and of the dust of the fight—there is the land of the trumpet's joyful sound, there is the place of the white robe and of the shout of conquest! Oh, what a thrill of joy shall shoot through the hearts of all the blessed when their conquests shall be complete in Heaven, when death, itself, the last of foes, shall be slain, when Satan shall be dragged captive at the chariot wheels of Christ, when Jesus shall have overthrown sin and trampled corruption as the mire of the streets, when the great song of universal victory shall rise from the hearts of all the redeemed! What a moment of pleasure shall that be!

But, dear Brothers and Sisters, you and I have foretastes of even that joy. We know what conflicts, what soul-battles we have even here—did you never struggle against unbelief and at last overcome it? Oh, with what joy did you lift your eyes to Heaven, the tears flowing down your cheeks, and say, “Lord, I bless You that I have been able to vanquish that sin.” Did you ever meet a strong temptation and wrestle hard with it, and know what it was to sing with great joy, “My feet well-nigh slipped; but Your mercy held me up”? Have you, like Bunyan’s Christian, fought with old Apollyon and have you seen him flap his dragon wings and fly away? There you had a foretaste of Heaven! There you had just a hint of what the ultimate victory will be! In the death of that one Philistine, you saw the destruction of the whole army. That Goliath who fell through your sling and stone was but one out of the multitude who must yield their bodies to the fowls of Heaven. God gives you partial triumphs that they may be the earnest of ultimate and complete victory! Go on and conquer, and let each conquest, though a harder one and more strenuously contested, be to you as a grape of Eshcol, a foretaste of the joys of Heaven!

V. Furthermore, without doubt, one of the best views we can ever give of Heaven is that it is A STATE OF COMPLETE ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD recognized and felt in the conscience. I suppose that a great part of the joy of the blessed saints consists in a knowledge that there is nothing in them to which God is hostile—that their peace with God has not anything to mar it—that they are so completely in union with the principles and thoughts of the Most High that His love is set on them, that their love is set on Him, and they are one with Him in every respect. Well, Beloved, and have we not enjoyed a sense of acceptance here below? Blotted and blurred by many doubts and fears, yet there have been moments when we have known ourselves as truly accepted as we shall know ourselves to be even when we stand before the Throne of God! There have been bright days with some of us, when we could set to our seal that God was true and when, afterwards, feeling that “the Lord knows them that are His,” we could say, “And we know that we are His, too.” Then have we known the meaning of Dr. Watts when he sang—

***“When I can say, ‘My God is mine,’
When I can feel Your glories shine,
I tread the world beneath my feet
And all that earth calls good or great.
While such a scene of sacred joys
Our raptured eyes and souls employ,
Here we could sit and gaze sway
A long, an everlasting day.”***

We had such a clear view of the perfection of Christ’s righteousness that we felt that God had accepted us and we could not be otherwise than happy! We had such a sense of the efficacy of the blood of Christ that we felt sure our sins were all pardoned and could never be mentioned against us forever!

And, Beloved, though I have spoken of other joys, let me say this is the cream of all of them—to know ourselves accepted in God’s sight. Oh, to feel that I, a guilty worm, am now at rest in my Father’s bosom! That I, a lost prodigal, am now feasting at His table with delight! That I, who once heard the voice of His anger, now listen to the notes of His love! This is a joy that is worth more than all worlds! What more can they know up there than that? And were it not that our sense of it is so imperfect, we might bring Heaven down to earth and might at least dwell in the suburbs of the celestial city if we could not be privileged to go within the gates!

So you see, again, we can have, in that sense, bunches of the grapes of Eshcol. Seeing that Heaven is a state of acceptance, we, too, can know and feel that acceptance and rejoice in it.

VI. And again, Heaven is A STATE OF GREAT AND GLORIOUS MANIFESTATIONS. As you look forward to your experience in Heaven, you sing—

***“Then shall I see, and hear, and know
All I desired or wished below.
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy.”***

You are now looking at it darkly, through a glass, but there you shall see face to face. Christ looks down on the Bible, and the Bible is His looking glass. You look into it and see the face of Christ as in a mirror, darkly. But soon you shall look upon Him face to face. You expect Heaven to be a place of peculiar manifestations. You believe that there Jesus will unveil His face to you, that—

***“Millions of years your wondering eyes
Shall over your Savior’s beauties rove.”***

You are expecting to see His face and never, never sin. You are longing to know the secrets of His heart. You believe that, in that day you shall see Him as He is, and shall be like He in the world of spirits. Well, Beloved, though Christ does not manifest Himself to us as He does to the bright ones there, have we not had blessed manifestations even while we have been in this vale of tears? Speak, Believer! Let your heart speak—have you not had visions of Calvary? Has not your Master sometimes touched your eyes with eye salve and let you see Him on His Cross? Have you not said—

***“Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the Cross I spend,
Life, and health, and peace possessing,
From the sinner’s dying Friend.
Here I’ll sit forever viewing
Mercy’s streams, in streams of blood—
Precious drops! My soul bedewing,
Plead and claim my peace with God”?***

Have you not wept both for joy and for grief when you beheld Him nailed to the tree for your sakes and saw Him bleeding out His life for you? Oh, yes! I know you have had such manifestations of Him! And

have you not seen Him in His risen glories? Have you not beheld Him exalted on His Throne? Have you not, by faith, beheld Him as the Judge of the quick and the dead? And as the Prince of the kings of the earth? Have you not looked through the dim future and seen Him with the crown of all kingdoms on His head, with the diadems of all monarchs beneath His feet, and the scepters of all thrones in His hand? Have you not anticipated the moment of His most glorious triumphs, when—

***“He shall reign from pole to pole,
With illimitable sway?”***

Yes, you have, and therein you have had foretastes of Heaven. When Christ has thus revealed Himself to you, you have looked within the veil and, therefore, you have seen what is there. You have had some glimpses of Jesus while here—those glimpses of Jesus are but the beginning of what shall never end! Those joyous melodies of praise and thanksgiving are but the preludes of the songs of Paradise!

VII. Lastly, the highest idea of Heaven is that it is A PLACE OF MOST HALLOWED AND BLISSFUL COMMUNION. I have not given you even half that I might have told you of the various characteristics of Heaven as described in God’s Word, but communion is the best. Communion! That word so little spoken of, so seldom understood. Blessed word, communion! Dearly-Beloved, you hear us say, “And the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all,” but there are many of you who do not know the meaning of that sweet Heaven in a word—communion! It is the flower of language! It is the honeycomb of words—communion! You like to talk of corruption best, do you not? Well, if you like that ugly word, you are very willing to meditate upon it. I do so when I am forced to do it, but communion seems to me to be a far sweeter word than that! You like to talk a great deal about affliction, do you not? Well, if you love that black word—you may have reason to love it—and if you care to be happy about it, you may do so. But give me for my constant text and for my constant joy, communion, and I will not choose which kind of communion it shall be!

Sweet Master, if You give me communion with You in Your sufferings. If I have to bear reproach and shame for Your name’s sake, I will thank You if I may have fellowship with You in it! And if You will privilege me to suffer for Your sake, I will call it an honor, so that I can be a partaker of Your sufferings! And if You give me sweet enjoyments, if You raise me up and allow me to sit with You in heavenly places in Christ, I will bless You! I will bless God for ascension-communion—communion with Christ in His glories! Do you not say the same? And for communion with Christ in death—have you died unto the world, as Christ died unto it? Then have you had communion with Him in resurrection? Have you been raised to newness of life, even as He was raised from the grave? And have you had communion with Him in His ascension, so that you know yourself to be an heir to a throne in Glory? If so, you have had the best earnest you can receive of the joys of Paradise! To be in Heaven is to lean

one's head upon the breast of Jesus—have you not done that on earth? Then you know what Heaven is! To be in Heaven is to talk to Jesus, to sit at His feet, to let our heart beat against His heart. If you have had that bliss on earth, you have already tasted some of the grapes of Heaven!

Cherish, then, these foretastes of whatever kind they may have been in your individual case. Differently constituted, you will all look at Heaven in a different light. Keep your foretaste just as God gave it to you. He has given each of you a separate experience of it which is most suitable to your own condition. Treasure it up! Think much of it, but think more of your Master, for, remember, it is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," that is your best foretaste of Heaven! And the more you realize that blessed Truth of God, the more fully prepared shall you be for the bliss of the joyous ones in the land of the happy!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: GENESIS 49.

Verses 1-3. *And Jacob called unto his sons and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together and hear, you sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father. Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power. All this was to Reuben's advantage, yet he was spoiled through one fault.*

4. *Unstable as water, you shall not excel.* So it is clear that the greatest strength and dignity and power will not serve a man so as to make him excel if he is unstable. There are many such persons still remaining in the world. Their doctrine changes like the moon and we never know what it is. Their spirit and temper constantly change. Their pursuits are sometimes in one direction and sometimes in another. They are, "everything by starts, and nothing long," and to each of them it may be said, "Unstable as water, you shall not excel."

4-7. *Because you went up to your father's bed, then defiled it: he went up to my couch. Simeon and Levi are brothers; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not into their secret; into their assembly, my honor, be not united: for in their anger they slew a man and in their self-will they dug down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.* It is a very remarkable circumstance, well worthy of notice, that this curse was turned into a real blessing, especially in the case of the tribe of Levi. It is true that they were divided and scattered, like handfuls of salt, throughout the whole of Israel, for they were attendants upon the Lord's priests and they had cities appointed to them so that while they dwelled here, and there, and everywhere, it was in order that they might reach the whole of the people and prove a blessing to them. Are any of you laboring under a very serious disadvantage? Does it look

to you like a curse? Then pray to God to make it into a blessing! I believe that often the worst thing that can happen to Christian men is really the best thing, for, while Nature would cry out, "The clouds are to be dreaded," Grace can reply—

***"The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head."***

8. *Judah, you are he whom your brethren shall praise.* His name was praise and such was his history to be, for David came of that tribe, and great David's greater Son, whom it is our joy to praise!

8. *Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's children shall bow down before you.* While that was true of Judah, it is still more true of Him who sprang out of Judah, even our Lord and King, the Lion of the tribe of Judah!

9. *Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, you are gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion, who shall rouse him?* Our Lord overcame His enemies even in the thicket of this world. And all power is given unto Him now that He has "gone up" again into His Glory. Let that man beware who would attack this Lion of the tribe of Judah—"Who shall rouse Him?" If you persecute His followers, you will rouse Him. If you deny His Truth, trample on the Doctrine of Atonement and reject His love, you will rouse Him! But beware in that day, for terrible is the King of Judah when He is once aroused! Therefore, submit yourselves to Him—"Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

10. *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.* When did the dominion depart from Judah till the Lord Jesus came as the Sent One? And unto Him, to this very day, the people gather and more and more shall gather in the latter days.

11, 12. *Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice wine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.* It was literally so with Judah, but it is gloriously so with our Lord to this day. It was His blood which yielded the juice of those rare clusters of the choice vine and now, with garments dyed with His own blood, He comes from Edom, for He has trodden down His foes, and He cries, "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me."

13. *Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Sidon.* So did Zebulun dwell even until the day when our Lord came, for Matthew writes concerning Him, "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zebulun and Nephthalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, The land of Zebulun, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of

the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.”

14, 15. *Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: and he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.* This was a poor character for Issachar to possess. It was a tame-spirited tribe that loved rest and ease and, therefore, did not fight with the common foe. Issachar crouched down between the burdens instead of taking them up and bearing them! God grant that none of us may be of that lazy tribe! I think that I know some who are—they could do a great deal, but they see that rest is good and the land is pleasant—so they idle away their days.

16, 17. *Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that bites the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.* Dan is noted among the tribes for its famous leap, capturing that distant part of the country for itself. Here good old Jacob, worn out by what he had already said, exhausted by the ecstasy into which as a Prophet he had been cast, paused awhile and panted.

18. *I have waited for Your salvation, O LORD.* But He soon resumed His prophecy—

19. *Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.* Many of God’s servants belong to this tribe, for their life is spent in conflict. They do not seek it, but it comes to them and, for a time, they seem to be overcome, yet let them clutch at the promise given to Gad.

20. *Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.* Well fed and then yielding correspondingly. There are some people who like to have their bread to be fat, but they yield to the King no dainties. Let it not be so with us, but let us both feed well and yield well.

21. *Naphtali is a hind let loose.* The type of what a Christian minister should be—indeed, what every Christian worker should be—“a hind let loose,” one who can say with David, “O Lord, truly I am Your servant. I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid. You have loosed my bonds.”

21. *He gives goodly words.* He has liberty in speech, freedom of utterance. He is not in bonds, he is as “a hind let loose.”

22. *Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well.* Where he can suck up abundant nutriment—

22. *Whose branches run over the wall.* He does more than he is expected to do. Nothing seems to content him, his “branches run over the wall.”

23, 24. *The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength.* You know how sorely Joseph was persecuted by his brothers, yet how the Lord was with him in all his troubles. It appears from these words that he was, himself, an archer, and that he was not in a hurry to shoot his arrows—his bow remained

still. It is the strong who can afford to be quiet. As you go across the village green, a goose will hiss at you, while the strong ox lies down calmly and takes no notice of you—"His bow abode in strength."

24. *And the arms of his hands.* Not only his hands, but the arms of his hands—

24-27. *Were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel) even by the God of your father, who shall help you; and by the Almighty, who shall bless you with blessings of Heaven above, blessings of the deep that lie under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: the blessings of your father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors into the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren. Benjamin is a ravenous wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.* Little Benjamin is the last of the tribes.

28-33. *All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spoke unto them, and blessed them; everyone according to his blessing he blessed them. And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah, his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebecca, his wife; and there I buried Leah. The purchase of the field and of the cave that is therein was from the children of Heth. And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people. It is a very sweet thing to die with a blessing on your lips. And it is equally good to live in the same spirit. Our Lord Jesus was blessing His disciples when He was taken from them—and since we do not know when we shall be taken away from our relatives, let us be always blessing them. May the Lord, who has blessed us, make us a blessing to others!*

—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.**

ENCOURAGE YOUR MINISTER!

NO. 537

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 18, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT CORNWALL ROAD CHAPEL, BAYSWATER.**

***“Encourage him.”
Deuteronomy 1:38.***

MOSES could not conduct the people into the promised land. Nor can the Law bring any man to Heaven. The Law may lead a man out of the Egypt of his sin, and it may bring him into the wilderness of conviction. There it may provide him with food and nourish him with some little comfort, but the Law can never give rest to the spirit into Canaan. Moses can never conduct the Israel of God. This was left for Joshua, whose name, you know, is but another form of the name, Jesus. As Joshua, alone, could drive the Canaanites out of the land, and give a portion to all the seed of Israel, so Jesus, alone, can give rest unto the heirs of Heaven.

Moses cannot do it. He may see the promised land, but he can never enter it. Legal convictions may be accompanied with some desires towards Divine things, yes, and some apprehensions of their sweetness, too. But the ultimate enjoyment, the rest which remains for the people of God, can only come to the Believer through Jesus Christ. See here the weakness of the Law. It is not able to bring us to our rest. “By the works of the Law shall no flesh living be justified.” Fly then, to Jesus. For He is the Captain of our salvation, by whom our foes shall be subdued and our everlasting inheritance secured.

It is not, however, my purpose to explore the *mystic* truth which is couched beneath. I confine myself this morning to the *moral* on the surface. Joshua was a young man in comparison with Moses. He was about to undertake the onerous task of commanding a great people. He had, moreover, the difficult enterprise of leading them into the promised land, and chasing out the nations which possessed it. The Lord commanded Moses, therefore, to encourage Joshua, that in the prospect of great labor he might not be dismayed. This teaches us, I think, that GOD, EVEN OUR GOD, IS GRACIOUSLY CONSIDERATE OF HIS SERVANTS and would have them well fitted for high enterprise with good courage.

He does not send them as a tyrant would send a soldier upon an errand for which he is not capable. Nor does He afterward withhold His succor, forgetful of the straits to which they may be reduced. But He is very careful of His servants and will not let one of them perish. He counts them as the apple of His eye, keeps them at all hours and defends them from all dangers. Why is this? The Lord our God has strong reasons for being thus considerate of His servants. Are they not *His children*? Is He not their Father? Does He not love them? If all human loves could be put together, they would scarcely make a drop in a bucket compared with the oceans of love which God the Father has towards His children.

All mothers' loves, all the loves of friends, of brothers and of sisters, of husbands and of wives—if all piled together, would be a molehill, compared with the towering mountain of the Divine love which God the Father has towards His chosen. We are—and there is no other figure which sets forth the whole length and breadth of that love—we are as dear to God as His Only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ—

***“So dear, so very dear, to God I cannot dearer be;
The love wherewith He loves His Son,
Such is His love for me.”***

“As the Father has loved Me, even so have I loved you,” said Christ.

Now, none of us would send a child of ours upon a difficult enterprise without being anxious for his welfare. We would not put him upon a trial beyond his strength, without, at the same time, guaranteeing to stand at his side and make his strength equal to his day. Moreover, the Father *Himself is concerned as to His honor in all that they do*. If any servant of God shall fall, then God's name is despised. The daughters of Philistia would rejoice and the inhabitants of Ekron triumph. “Aha! Aha,” they would say, “so we would have it! God's servants are put to the rout. Jehovah was not able to give them victory. They trusted in Him and they were confounded. They rested upon Him and they fell to the ground.”

Think not that the heavenly Father will ever permit this to be said. Will He ever send forth His servants to let them fall by the hand of the Adversary? He is too jealous of His great name. His honor is too much concerned ever to permit this. You feeble ones, to whom God has given to do or to suffer for His name's sake, rest assured that He has His eyes upon you now. He cannot leave you, unless He can cease to be “God over all, blessed forever.” He cannot forget you, for His heart of love can never change, and the relationship which He has towards you can never be dissolved.

Beloved, *God the Father* cares for His children because they are His children and because His honor is concerned in them. How sweet the thought—if I fail, God fails—if I succeed, being God's sent servant, God has all the honor. Could I lean on Him and fail, then to that degree God's purpose is not fulfilled, God's promise is not kept, God's Nature is not glorified. Oh, when you can fall back on the name, the renown, the very Character of God. When you can say, as Moses said upon the Mount, “What will You do for Your great name?” When you can plead as Luther did, “Lord, this is no quarrel of mine, it is Yours! You know You did put me to speak against Your foes and now if You leave me, where is Your Truth?” When you can plead with God in this way, surely He will rescue you. You cannot fail when your cause is God's cause.

Nor is the Divine Father, alone, concerned. Is not the *Son of God* concerned in the welfare of His Brothers and Sisters? He has *bought them with His blood*. That which a man dearly purchases he will highly prize. If he did not, it would be as much as to confess that he had paid too costly a sum for what he bought. You are bought with a price. A price tremendous enough. The King of Glory gave His heart's blood to redeem poor worms like ourselves, but He will never confess that He gave too much for us. In

love He will esteem the purchase equal to the price He paid. The love and the price are both infinite.

As He looks upon any one of His people, He says, "There is My purchase," and He values you not so much for what you are intrinsically worth as because He sees the drops of His own blood upon you. "There," says He, "is the travail of My soul. There is the Divine satisfaction My Father gives Me for the sufferings I endured." Do you think that when He thus values His servants He will leave them without His help? It cannot be. Moreover *our blessed Lord has passed through precisely those very troubles* to which He calls His people. "We have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

The thorn in your foot pierced His heel before it touched you. The sorrow which sends the tears gushing from your eyes have first of all swollen His heart—

***"In every pang that rends the heart,
The Man of Sorrows had a part."***

"In all their affliction He was afflicted and the angel of His Presence saved them." If you have been widowed, you feel a compassion for those who are brought into the like state, to which others who have never passed through it are strangers. Were you ever a fatherless child? I know you will love orphans. Now our Lord and Master was forsaken of His Father. "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" He says. He has gone all the length of human grief, and therefore it is not possible that He should be inconsiderate concerning any one of His Beloved.

Do you not know, to crown this point, that every Believer is actually *a part of Christ*? We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Were the poor servants of God at Damascus persecuted? Christ suffered. "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" To this very day our Head is in sympathy with us—

***"He feels at His heart all our sighs and our groans,
For we are most near Him, His flesh and His bones."***

Do you think the Head will not care for the members? Shall I let my finger fester uncared for, until it needs to be cut away from mortification? Not while my brain can think, or my tongue can speak. And Jesus, so long as He can see His people and His tongue can make any intercession, will not let even the meanest member of His Mystical Body suffer for lack of supplies. Even as God cared for Joshua, so does Christ care for you this morning, beloved Member of the Body of Christ.

Is not this sufficient argument—the Father's interest and the Son's? If not, remember *the most blessed Spirit. He dwells in all the people of God.* How can He dwell in them and not be mindful of them? We forget the sick and the poor because they live in a back street and we do not pass there. But you could not have poverty pining in your own house, methinks, without readiness to relieve it. You would not have sickness lying in your own chamber without showing sympathy. Now our body is the house of the Holy Spirit. He dwells in the body as in a temple, and do you think that He will see His people languish for lack of Divine Grace while He is present with them?

Can it be that He will walk in them and see them famish, perceive their lack and destitution and not supply their wants? Dream not so harshly of the tender and blessed Spirit, whose name is “the Comforter.” Be it never forgotten that *it is His office to supply the wants of God’s people*. It is the Holy Spirit’s business to see after the saints. “If I go away,” said Jesus, “I will send the Comforter unto you.” So long as they had the personal Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, the disciples could want for nothing. As long as He had a crust of bread, they had half.

If He had a place where to lay His head at any time given Him by charity, they could rest with Him. “Where I am there shall also My servant be,” was Christ’s loving rule. When He went away, then they were left like orphans until the Spirit of God came as another Comforter, “who should abide with them forever.” Do you think that the Holy Spirit will neglect His office? O you weak and trembling Believer, do you imagine that God the Holy Spirit will be negligent of His sacred trust? Can you suppose that He has undertaken what He cannot, or will not, perform?

Now if it is His business to work in you, to strengthen you, to illuminate you, to comfort you, do you suppose He has forgotten you? Why say you, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, “My way is hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed over by my God? Have you not known, have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary.” You are near to Him. Now His eyes are upon you. Like as a father pities His children, even so the Lord pities you. And like as a mother tenderly fondles her suckling, even so the Lord loves you. The heart of His love is yearning over you, pitying your sufferings, ready to help you in your distresses. Trust in Him and He will surely encourage you, and with your fears exchanged for faith, you shall triumph over every foe, and realize every promise.

Observe well *how far* the tender consideration of God for His servants extends! He not only considers their outward state and the absolute interests of their condition, but He remembers their spirits and loves to see them of good courage. Some people think it a small thing for a Believer to be full of doubts and fears, but I do not think so. I perceive from this text that my Master would not have you entangled with fears. He would have you without carefulness, without doubt, without sorrow. He says, “Encourage him”—as much as if He had told Moses that it was an important thing for His servant Joshua to have his courage duly sustained.

My Master does not think so lightly of your unbelief as you do. You are desponding this morning. Well, this is a grievous matter. My Lord loves not to see your countenance sad. It was a law, you remember, of Ahasuerus, that no one should come into the king’s court dressed in mourning. But it is not the law of my Master, for you may come mourning as you are. But still He would have you put off those rags and that sackcloth, for surely there is much reason to rejoice. Rejoice in the Lord always! Be of good courage! Wait on the Lord, for He will renew your strength.

The Christian man must have his spirits sustained in order that he may glorify the Lord. If his spirits are kept up, he will be able to endure trial upon trial. He comes to the fire, but it will never kindle upon him

when his faith is firm. He walks through the rivers, but the floods never overflow him while he can look to his God. The sweetest songs Believers ever have are those they sing at night. God's people are like the nightingale—their music is best heard when the sun is gone down. Oh, how much depends on your spirit being supported! Let the spirit sink and a little trouble lays like a dead weight upon the soul.

On the other hand, if faith is firm, tons of trouble become light as a feather. Unless the spirits of God's people are sustained, *they will dishonor their God*. They will think harsh things of Him, and perhaps they will speak harsh things against Him, and so the holy name of God will not be had in good repute. *What a bad example it is!* This disease of doubt and discouragement is an epidemic that soon spreads among the Lord's flock. One downcast Believer makes twenty sad. This *phobia* is a contagious species of madness as soon as men are bitten with it. If there is one doubt of the promise of God, straightway a whole congregation will begin to foam with like doubts.

When Paul was in the ship and took bread and ate it in the midst of the storm, then all the crew were encouraged. But if Paul had been downcast, then, from the captain to the smallest cabin boy, there would have been great distress. Oh, be of good courage for the sake of your Brothers and sisters in Christ. When you would say a hard or bitter thing, keep it back as David did, lest he should offend against the generation of God's people. "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me." Unless your courage is kept up, *Satan will be too much for you*.

My experience teaches me that the cowardly old Tempter always comes upon us when we are in our worst state. If he would but meet me *sometimes*, I could drive him as chaff before the wind. But he will always meet me when an attack of bile, or some domestic trouble, or ill tidings in the camp hinder my cheerfulness. Then, sure enough, in some dark, narrow lane stands the arch-enemy, with his sword drawn and he swears he will spill the blood of my soul. But just let the heart be right, let the spirit be joyful in God my Savior and the joy of the Lord shall be your strength and no fiend of Hell shall make headway against you.

Besides, *labor is light* to a man of cheerful spirit! You can work all day and almost all night when the spirits are right—but once let the heart sink and your soul lack encouragement—and then you grow weary and cry, "Would God it were evening and the shadows were drawn out, that we might rest from our toil." Success waits upon cheerfulness. The man who toils rejoicing in his God, believing with all his heart, has success guaranteed. He who sows in hope shall reap in joy. He who trusts in the Lord and laughs at impossibilities, shall soon find that there are no impossibilities to laugh at! To the man who is confident in Jehovah, all things are possible. It is thus of paramount importance that the spirits of the Christian should be constantly kept up. God so considers it. Thus says the Lord, "Encourage him." Make the good man's heart glad. Make the Believer sing with joy. "*Encourage him.*"

II. Secondly, we remark that GOD USES HIS OWN PEOPLE TO ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER. He did not say to the angel, "Gabriel, there is

My servant Joshua, about to take the people into Canaan—fly down and encourage him.” God never works needless miracles. If His purposes can be accomplished by ordinary means, He will certainly accomplish them without using miraculous energy. Gabriel would have not been half so well fitted for the work as Moses. A Brother’s sympathy is more precious than an angel’s embassy.

The angel, swift of wing, had better known the Master’s bidding than the people’s temper. An angel had never experienced the hardness of the road, nor seen the fiery serpents. Nor had he led the stiff-necked multitude in the wilderness. Moses felt it all. For my part, I am glad to think that God does His work by man. It gives us such a bond of brotherhood. We must be dependent on one another. We need condolence in our grief. And we invite companionship in our joys. So, being mutually dependent on one another’s countenance and counsel, we are fused more completely into one mass and made more thoroughly one family.

To whom, then, should this work of encouraging the people be committed? Surely *the elders* should do it. Those of riper years than their fellows. I know some aged persons, who whenever they see a young Christian, make it a point to inform him of all the difficulties and perils of the road. Like *Mistrust* and *Timorous*, they have always a doleful story to tell about the way to Heaven. This was the old style of Christian in many of our Churches.

For my part, I think that the aged Christian is better employed in looking after the lambs of the flock and trying to carry them in their bosoms. Talk cheerily to the young and anxious enquirer. Lovingly try to remove stumbling blocks out of his way. When you find a spark of Divine Grace in the heart, kneel down and blow it into a flame. Leave the young Believer to discover the roughness of the road by degrees. Tell him of the strength which dwells in God, of the sureness of the promise, of the delightfulness of fellowship with Jesus, of the charms of communion with Christ. Entice the young Christian on as good mothers teach their children to walk by holding out here a sweet, and there some tempting thing, that they may put their trembling feet one after the other and at last know how to walk.

I would that every Church had many of these aged Brothers and Sisters, fathers and mothers in Israel, who take this for their motto whenever they see a young Christian,—“Encourage him.” I know of nothing more inspiring than to hear the experience of a gray-headed saint. I have found much spiritual comfort in sitting at the feet of my venerable grandfather, more than eighty years of age. The last time I saw him, I said to him, “I suppose you have had many trials, Grandfather?” He said, “I have not had too many and the most of what I have had, I have made myself.”

“And do you think that God will ever leave His people?” I asked. “No,” he said, “for if He would leave one of them, He would have left me. But He is a faithful God, and I have proved Him, for I have known His love more than seventy years, and yet He has been faithful to me. Not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised.” Why, it comes home to the hearts of us young people and makes us feel that we have

found something which it is safe to depend upon when those who have gone through the valley can bear such a word of testimony as this!

Do not let a word of peevishness come out of your mouth, my aged Brothers and Sisters. Let no syllable of complaining ever escape you. Let your mouth be filled with your Lord's praises and with His honor all the day and so you will encourage others.

Not the aged only, but *the wise in the family* should be comforters. All Believers are not equal in knowledge. Some are quick of apprehension in the ways of the Lord. They rapidly acquire doctrinal knowledge. And experimental knowledge comes to them with a brighter light than it does to duller intellects. There are in all our Churches those who never will be doctors of divinity. Though they know right well that they are sinners and that Christ saves them, and so their acceptance is secured, if you talk to them about the mysteries of the Gospel they will soon get into depths where they lose their footing, for they have not learned to swim.

Perhaps they will never be able to understand, or at least to appreciate, the doctrine of election. Now, wiser men should not keep their knowledge to themselves. Above all they should not use it to criticize. I could tell of men who carry knowledge like a sword. They listen to the sermon and when they meet some friend who gained a little good from it, they will cavil. They say, "Oh, the first or the third point I did not think quite sound." They will be sure to have something to say that will knock the bread from the mouths of those who are willing to eat. They are more knowing than wise.

Moses was wise in doctrinal knowledge. With what consummate wisdom he addressed Joshua. "Be strong and of a good courage—for you must go with this people unto the land which the Lord has sworn unto their fathers to give them. And you shall cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, He it is that does go before you. He will be with you. He will not fail you, neither forsake you—fear not, neither be dismayed." Oh you that have searched the Scriptures through and know its promises—you that have been among these beds of spices and whose garments smell of frankincense, be sure to quote the promises of God to trembling hearts, and especially to those engaged in arduous labor for the Master.

Comfort them. Repeat the doctrine of God's faithfulness. Say to them, "He will be with you. He will not fail you, neither forsake you—fear not, neither be dismayed." Oh that the wise-hearted in the Lord's family would be thus employed at all times!

Nor can I doubt that the *happier* sort of Christians ought always to be engaged in comforting the mournful and sorrowing. You know whom I mean. Their eyes always sparkle! Wherever they go they carry lamps bright with animation. Sunshine gleams in their faces. They live in the light of God's Countenance. We have some of a more somber countenance, good people, too. They always see the black side of affairs. Now, you who are happy, try to encourage those that are downcast. Oh, dear Friends, I am afraid we neglect this duty, many of us.

You will say, "How can I perform it?" Speak a kind word always. Find out those who are weary and give them a word of consolation. Even a

smile from your face may do them good. Do not avoid them because they are melancholy, but rather pursue them. Hunt them out. Do not let them be quiet in their nest of thorns. If the Lord has given it to you to soar aloft into the clear blue ether, try to carry your friend with you and lift him above the clouds. Suppose your house is on a hill and he lives down in the marsh, ask him to climb the hill and stay with you.

Perhaps you have the keys of the promise. Use the key and open the door for him. It is just possible that you may live in the upper story where you can see further and behold more of the blessed land. Ask him to come up from his cellar and walk on the roof of your palace and scan the prospect through your telescope, "*Encourage him.*"

Let the Brother of low degree be likewise encouraged by these who are *rich* among you. You may frequently breathe comfort into a desponding spirit by seasonable help. The destitute will think himself rich upon your leavings. Perhaps your poor Brother thinks you look down upon him because you are better off than he is—try to prevent his thinking so. If God has blessed you with a good position in Providence, be ready to encourage those that are poor and needy. Oh, if all these things I have been counseling should be put in practice, what a vast amount of *happiness*, by God's Grace, would be *created*! Our Churches would be more like families.

I do not like people to come into a place of worship like so many icebergs floating out to sea and wishing to avoid each other. I like to see all distinctions broken down, except the distinctions of superior Grace and those only observed because one Brother has cast in more to the common treasury of the Church of spiritual riches than another can do. I like those who fear the Lord to speak often to one another. We are getting into a bad state when they who fear the Lord speak often *against* one another. I believe that this one practice of encouraging each other might restore to the Churches that holy *fraternity* and blessed love which once distinguished them.

I am sure this would enrich you all. It is by commerce that countries grow rich. France sends her exports to England and England repays her with abundance. The labor of the humble and the skill and enterprise of the lofty contribute to the great commonwealth. An exchange of thought tends to help. A stream of *holy wealth* would flow through our Churches if each one would seek the other out with this aim of holy encouragement. How many a good thing is strangled in birth! How many a good enterprise is dashed to pieces on the shoals before it gets out to sea.

Encourage that loving-hearted Sister who thinks that she might at least take an infant-class in the Sunday school. Encourage that aged woman who has but little talent, but who yet might go from house to house to attend the sick. Encourage that poor struggling tradesman who would do something for the Master if he could by any means be delivered from the constant cares which harass him. Encourage every soul that has a spark of Divine Grace in it. Labor to help others and you shall find a most gracious return in your own soul. God encourages you. Christ encourages you as He points to the Heaven He has won for you. The Spirit encourages you as He works in you to will and to do of His own will and pleasure. Do

you then act the Divine part and go forth to encourage others, according to the motto, "Encourage him."

III. I advance to THE OBJECT that is uppermost in my mind. It struck me some six weeks ago that I might say a few things to my Brother's congregation which he might not like to say himself. And that as his was a new enterprise—and I am sure all our hearts anxiously desire it the very richest success—I might possibly take the liberty of saying a few things to you, the congregation clustering around this pulpit, which may be useful in the future of the Church. I shall speak of him as a stranger, as I should speak of any other young man anxious to build up a Church and glorify his Master.

I believe there is a special occasion for the exercise of this duty of encouraging one another in the case of the minister and Church in this place. It is a fresh enterprise surrounded with peculiar difficulties and demanding special labor. "Why," you say, "should a minister need encouraging? We have plenty of troubles all the week long with our losses here and crosses there. We want encouragements, but surely ministers do not." Ah, if you want to have a refutation of that idea you had better come into this pulpit and occupy it a little time. If you would like to exchange, I would truly say that so far as the pleasure of my voice is concerned, apart from the spiritual joy my Lord gives me, I would change places with a crossing-sweeper, or a man who breaks stones on the road.

Let a man carry out the office of a Christian minister aright and he will never have any rest. "God help," says Richard Baxter, "the man who thinks the minister has an easy life." Why, he works not only all day, but in his sleep you will find him weeping for his congregation—starting in his sleep with his eyes filled with tears, as if he had the weight of his congregation's sins resting on his heart and could not bear the load. I would not be that man in the ministry who does not feel himself so fearfully responsible that if he could escape from the ministry by going with Jonah into the depths of the sea, he would cheerfully do it.

For if a minister is what he should be, there is such a weight of solemn concern, such a sound of trembling in his ears that he would choose any profession or any work, however arduous, sooner than the preacher's post. "If the watchman warn them not they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." To sit down and ponder over the question—"Am I free of his blood?" is terrible. I have sometimes thought I must have a day or two of rest, but I frankly confess that rest is very little rest to me, for I think I hear the cries of perishing souls, the wailings of spirits going down to Hell, who chide me thus—"Preacher, can you rest? Minister, can you be silent? Ambassador of Jesus, can you cast aside the robes of your office? Up! And to your work again."

As Mr. Whitfield said, when he thought of the ministry and what was concerned in it, he wanted to stand on the top of every hackney coach in London and preach the Gospel as he rode along. It is a work so solemn that if you do not encourage your minister, your minister will probably sink down in despair. Remember that the man, himself, needs encouragement, because he is weak. Who is sufficient for these things? To serve

in any part of the spiritual army is dangerous, but to be a captain is to be doubly exposed. The most of the shots are aimed at the officers. If Satan can find a flaw in our character, then it will be, "Publish it, publish it, publish it!" If he can lend us to keep back a doctrine or go amiss in practice, or wander in experience, he is glad enough.

How delighted is the devil to break the vessels of mercy. Pray for the poor minister, whom you expose to perish, if you do not preserve him by supplication. If there were a ship at sea stranded and broken on the rocks and someone volunteered to carry a rope to the sinking crew, you, standing on the shore, could do no more—methinks you could not do less—than cry, "O God! Help him to bear the rope to that wrecked ship." Pray for the minister and encourage him, for there are plenty to *discourage* him. There are always carping spirits abroad who will remind him of any fault. He will be afflicted by those cowards who will not dare to sign their names to a letter, but send it to him anonymously.

And then there is the devil, who, the moment the man has got out of the pulpit, will say, "There is a poor sermon! You will never dare to preach it again." After he has been preaching for weeks there will come a suggestion, "You are not in your proper sphere of labor." There are all sorts of discouragements to be met with. Professing Christians will backslide. Those who do remain will often be inconsistent, and he will be sighing and crying in his closet, while you, perhaps, are thanking God that your souls have been fed under him.

Encourage your minister, I pray you, wherever you attend—encourage him for your own sakes. A discouraged minister is a serious burden upon the congregation. When the fountain gets out of order, you cannot expect to find water at any of the taps. And if the minister is not right, it is something like a steam engine in a great factory—everybody's loom is idle when the power is out of order.

See that he is resting upon God and receiving His Divine power and you will all know, each Sunday, the benefit of it. This is the least thing you can do. There are many other things which may cause you expense, effort, time—but to *encourage* your minister is so easy, so simple a matter, that I may well press upon you to do it.

Perhaps you will say, "Well, if it is so simple and easy, tell us, who are expecting to settle down in this place, how we can encourage the minister here." Well, you can do it in several ways. You can encourage him *by very constant attendance*. By the way, looking round here, I think I know some of the persons present who belong to neighboring Chapels.

What business have you here? Why did you leave your own minister? If I see one come into my place from the congregation of another Brother in the ministry, I would like just to give him a flea in his ear such as he may never forget. What business have you to leave your minister? If everyone were to do so, how discouraged the poor man would be! Just because somebody happens to come into this neighborhood, you will be leaving your seats?

A compliment to me, you say. I thank you for it. But now, in return, let me give you this advice—these who are going from place to place are of no

use to anybody. But those are the truly useful men who, when the servants of God are in their places, keep to theirs and let everybody see that whoever discourages the minister, *they* will not, for they appreciate his ministry.

Again, let me say by often being *present at the Prayer Meetings* you can encourage the minister. You can always tell how a Church is getting on by the Prayer Meetings. I will almost prophecy the kind of sermon on the Sunday from the sort of Prayer Meeting on the Monday. If many come up to the House of God and they are earnest, the pastor will get a blessing from on High. It cannot but be, for God opens the windows of Heaven to believing prayer. Never fail to plead for your pastor in your closet.

Oh, dear Friends, when you mention a father's name and a child's name, let the minister's name come forth, too. Give him a large share in your heart, and both in private and public prayer, encourage him. Encourage him, again, by *letting him know if you have received any good*. Oh, if there should come into this House of Prayer a sinner needing a Savior and not knowing the way, and my Brother's words shall point him to the Savior's Cross. If he should be the means of showing you what faith means and of leading you to believe in Him who has reconciled us unto God by His death, do not conceal the good news—come and tell it!

The best way to do it will be by proposing to be united with the Church in fellowship. Our Church Meeting nights, when we receive fresh candidates into fellowship, are the harvest nights in the Christian ministry. Then we see how God's cause prospers in our hand. But if many in the Church who have been converted fail to let the minister know it and hold back, how is the poor man to be comforted?

I know I address some here—God's people—who have never made a profession. Suppose all God's people did as you do? And they have as much right to do it as you have. How, I ask you, would the ministry itself be maintained? How could ministers' hearts be kept from breaking, if they never knew of any conversions? Make haste! Do not put it off! Delay not to keep God's commandments, but come forward at once and be baptized, and acknowledge what God has done for your soul.

Again, you can all encourage the minister *by the consistency of your lives*. I do not know when I ever felt more gratified than on one occasion, when sitting at a Church Meeting, having to report the death of a young Brother who was in the service of an eminent employer, a little note came from him to say, "My servant, Edward _____, is dead. I send you word at once, that you may send me another young man. For if your members are such as he was, I never wish to have better servants around me."

I read the letter at the Church Meeting and another was soon found. It is a cheering thing for the Christian minister to know that his converts are held in repute. Of another member of my Church an ungodly employer said, "I do not think anything of him. He is of no use to anybody. He cannot tell a lie!" Oh, that is the honor which a Christian minister longs and pants after, to have consistent followers, to have those listening to him who will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

Gather round my Brother, all of you, and encourage him, by earnestly aiding and abetting him in every good word and work. There is a neighborhood here, I am told, requiring evangelization. Here we have, side-by-side, poverty and riches. Shall not yonder wretched potteries be the better for the building of this House of Prayer? I am sure my friend, Sir Morton Peto, would think he had wasted his money if it were merely for the gathering of a congregation and not for improving the neighborhood.

We build our Houses of Prayer always with a view to the people round about. We believe it is like opening a well in the wilderness, or an oasis in the desert, or placing a drinking fountain where thirsty souls may drink. It is introducing a new physician into the neighborhood to attend to the diseases and sickness of souls. Oh, how my heart yearns after the success of this house—not only because the minister is my blood brother, and also my Brother in Christ, but because he is a valiant soldier of Christ.

To preach the Truth of God he has not hesitated to make himself a multitude of enemies elsewhere and will not be ashamed to do the same here, if the same case should occur. I honor him because he has honored my Master. And I expect that you will get from him the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth—so far as God has taught it to him. I know he is ready to lay down his own neck for the conversion of souls. I know his earnestness to do anything for the conversion of sinners.

And if you do not encourage him, you will bring down upon your head every curse of those who reject the Prophet of God. But encouraging him, you will see a Church flocking around him which shall last long after our time. It shall be a perennial stream of benediction to ages yet unborn, until Christ Himself shall come and consummate the kingdom, by reigning Himself in Person among the sons of men. May the Lord grant His blessing!

Some of you cannot encourage the minister. You can encourage no one, for you are not born again yourselves. Oh, if you have not passed from death unto life, the first thing that can encourage him is to begin to think about your own state. Where are you? What are you? Out of God, out of Christ, out of safety? You will be out of life and out of Heaven—shut in the pit forever, except you repent. Oh, you will encourage the preacher, if the Lord leads you, to consider your ways and turn from sin and from self-righteousness, too. Look to the Almighty Savior, able to save unto the uttermost all among you who shall trust Him. May the Lord add a blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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ADVANCE!

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A SERMON
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***“The LORD our God spoke unto us in Horeb, saying,
You have dwelt long enough in this mountain.”
Deuteronomy 1:6.***

IT is a good thing, sometimes, to look back—to take a retrospective view of our life. It is a very bad thing to live upon the past—to say, “I believe I am a child of God because I had certain spiritual enjoyments and experiences 10 or 12 years ago.” Ah, such stale fare as this will not feed hungry souls. They need present enjoyment, or, at least, present confidence in the ever-living God. Yet, Brothers and Sisters, we may sometimes gather fuel for today from the ashes of yesterday’s fire. Remembering the mercies of God in the past, we may rest assured concerning the present and the future.

If we have wisely learned by experience, we may, from our own failures in the past, gain wisdom which shall enable us to avoid the evils which overcame us on former occasions. It is well to do as you may sometimes have seen the bargemen do on a river or canal. They walk backward, pushing with all their might backward, to drive their barge forward and, sometimes, we may go backward just far enough to help us to push forward, but no further than that! Never must anyone of us say to himself, “What I was in my youth, or what I was in middle life, is a sufficient comfort for me now. Soul, take your ease, for I have much goods laid up for many years.” That will never do, for we need to exercise a present faith to enjoy a present love—and to live in present holiness and fear of the Lord. Yet it will help us if we remember all the ways whereby the Lord our God has led us these many years in the wilderness.

But, coming to our text, we are reminded that *we must expect changes*—“You have dwelt long enough in this mountain.” Secondly, *we ought not to make these changes without the authorization of our Divine Leader*—“The Lord our God spoke unto us in Horeb, saying, You have dwelt long enough in this mountain.” But, thirdly, *in our spiritual pilgrimage there are times when it becomes very clear that we have been long enough in a certain condition and need to make an advance towards the Canaan which is our blest inheritance.*

I. To begin, then, WE MUST EXPECT CHANGES.

Israel was not always to dwell at Horeb and even the choicest place of Divine manifestation is not always to be ours. The land of Jordan and of the Hermonites and the Hill Mizar, though very precious to us because of the spiritual experiences we have enjoyed there, are not to be our permanent places of abode. We have to journey onward and pitch our tent somewhere else.

We need not wonder at this, my Brothers and Sisters, *for this is a changing world*. We would be out of gear with the whole creation if we did not frequently change. Behold how the year changed. It seems but yesterday that the rivers were locked in ice. Soon we saw the flowers peeping up from the soil and now we have reached midsummer—and shall soon be looking for the appointed weeks of harvest! And it will not be long before winter will be here again. On this earth, on the greatest or on the minutest scale, all things change, whether it is an empire that rises and passes away, or a crocus or a rose that blooms and fades. All things that are, once were not and, by-and-by, shall not be, or, at least, the place which knows them, now, shall know them no more forever. The forest once slept in an acorn cup. That some forest, beneath the axe, shall pass away and vanish into smoke. All things change and, therefore, we, also, must expect to change.

And, mark you, *we have already changed*. Perhaps we had a happy childhood and can remember even now the songs of the nursery and the holy hymns of our cradle days. But there came a time when we had dwelt long enough in that mountain, for it would have been ill for us always to continue as children. Then we were youths and were at school. And perhaps we recollect with pleasure those free days of boyhood and girlhood when, if we did not know the value of knowledge, at any rate we found that those who taught us had more pleasant ways of teaching than our fathers knew! But it was not well for us to always stay at school—there came a time when our parents felt and we felt that we had stayed long enough in that mountain. Since that, some of us have passed from change to change till we have come to the full maturity of spiritual life. And some of you I see, with the snows of many a winter lying on your brows, are approaching yet another change—you know that, by-and-by, you must come to another, for it will be said of you, “You have dwelt long enough in this mountain.” And so, we shall pass through all the several stages of man till we come to the blessed mountain where we shall never dwell too long, nor ever feel that we have dwelt there long enough! But while we are beneath the moon, there must be waxing and waning to all who come under the moon’s spell. And where the very heart of the earth, like a great sea, has its ebbs and its floods, we cannot but expect that we, too, should have our ebbs and our floods without us and within us.

We must expect to have changes, next, because *it is good for us to have them*. For, if not, we might become rooted to the earth. This is not our rest. But if we were always in one place and in one state, we would begin to think that it was. Have you not noticed, with regard to the brethren who are free from trouble—who, to use a Scriptural simile, have

not been emptied from vessel to vessel—how they settle on their lees and what a scum generally rises upon the surface of such people’s hearts? Because they have no changes, they begin to think that they shall continue forever as they are. They do not put that thought into words—they are not quite so foolish—yet they have the notion treasured up in their hearts that tomorrow will be as this day, only more abundant, and all the future in a similar fashion. If we have a long-continued spell of calm weather, we are apt to think that it will always be so. And if it *were* always so, perhaps we would get into as bad a condition as Coleridge pictures in his “*Ancient Mariner*.” Because there was no wind to drive the ship along and the tropical sun was shining everywhere, everything was becoming corrupt. God knows that our tendency is in that direction and, therefore, He makes us to be pilgrims and strangers here—as all our fathers were.

Were it not for changes, too, *some would grow utterly weary*. Some of God’s children would welcome almost any change from their present condition. They suffer, perhaps, from abject poverty—perhaps from unkindness on the part of those who ought to love and care for them. It may be that their condition is one in which the iron enters into their soul. Possibly their sorrow is a secret sorrow and the more severe because it must be kept to themselves and cannot be communicated to others. A worm, unseen by any human eye, is gnawing at their heart. They dare not mention it! If they did, they would not be sympathized with and might even be ridiculed. Ah, we little know the sorrows of others and there are some who look most cheerful and are wise to look so, who ought to be praised because with sacred patience they keep their sorrow to themselves! There are some whom you, perhaps, are envying, who far more need your pity than they deserve your envy. There is much sorrow even among God’s saints and it is a great mercy for them that the Lord sometimes turns their captivity. It seemed a pity that when Job had all his treasures, there should come such a change to him and that he should have to sit down among the ashes. But when he sat among the ashes, it was a happy circumstance for him that a change came and that, “the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.” What if you are the lowest spoke of the wheel just now? You will be the highest spoke in less than a minute, for the wheel is always turning round! You are not in a permanent position as to your low estate any more than as to your high estate—if prosperity does not endure, neither does adversity. It is written, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” The hours of the night will pass away in due course and the joys of the morning will recompense you for the sorrows of the season of darkness.

Besides, dear Friends, it is well that we should have these changes because, *if we did not, we might, all of us, become unwatchful*. I do not know anything that helps more to take away the freshness and vigor with which a man does a thing than for him to do that particular thing every day. The same kind of thing happens when he does something many

times that at first is very trying. If you put a man into one of the big boilers over in Southwark when they are putting in the rivets—well, I would not like to be that man, for the hammering is apt to make him deaf. Yet I am told by those who have to be inside the boiler to hold the rivet head, that they do not know anything about the great noise, for they have got used to it. They are like the blacksmith's dog that will go to sleep under the anvil when the sparks are flying all around him—and it is possible to get used to anything in life. The sentinel who stands still in his box must not be very severely blamed if he goes to sleep. It is a good thing for him if he has a little walk to take, so that he can go to and fro with his rifle on his shoulder and thus may be able to stay awake by a change of posture. He may have a difficulty in doing that, however, if the watch is continued too long. The mill horse that goes round and round perpetually in a certain track, learns to sleep as he goes his round. There was a prisoner who was sentenced to the cruel punishment of being awakened every quarter of an hour throughout the night, but, at last, he learned to answer to the knock and still sleep right on—and so was not disturbed one whit!

I can well understand how, abiding in one state, we may get to be mechanical as a matter of routine, with no life and no vigor. I wonder how some of you would feel if you had to preach as often as I do? I wonder whether you would not find that it was apt to become rather mechanical? That is one of the things which I dread almost beyond all else and I trust that it will never become so with me, for I feel that if our ministry ever becomes merely mechanical, our usefulness will be completely destroyed. But the same thing may happen in Christian life—you may get to live mechanically. I have seen professedly Christian people who have done the right thing, but they have done it while they have been sound asleep. Did you ever go into a congregation—it has not been my lot to see such a sight often, but I have seen such a sight—where the minister has been fast asleep and the preaching has been nothing better than articulate snoring? There, the people sing while they are asleep and pray while they are asleep—there is no life, no force, no power, no change of any sort! Well now, if you could burn that meeting house down and the good man had to preach tomorrow in the little meadow by the side of it, why, he would then be wide awake and so would all his people! The mere change of position would do them good. Sometimes, sitting in a different seat might help people to feel a little more attentive to the message. It is for this reason that the Lord comes and shakes us up, and we begin to awake out of sleep and each one says, "Where am I? New troubles have given me new Grace and new comforts, so, Lord, I bless You for them. Give me new praises." Thus the change begins to do us good! It lifts us out of the old ruts and sets us doing something different from what we have done before—which we are able to do with a measure of freshness which we have not previously known. That may be one reason why we have changes.

Another reason is this—if *we have no changes in our pilgrimage, it is quite clear that we shall make no progress*. If the children of Israel had remained at Horeb they would never have reached the land of Canaan. We cannot stay in one place and go on to another at the same time! So, shifts and changes often promote growth. Look, there is a tree which has grown in the place it now occupies as much as it can grow there because there is not much earth there. And besides, there is a pan of rock just underneath it from which it cannot derive any nutriment. Now, if with care the husbandman lifts the tree and shifts it to another position where the soil is deeper and richer, the tree will develop wondrously! And, sometimes, it is so with us. We have grown as big in Christ as we ever shall grow in that particular position, so now we must be shifted into a new one. Why, our very comforts may be like a pan of rock under the tap-root of our soul! We cannot get down any deeper and it may be that our circumstances shut us in like huge walls through which the roots of our spiritual being cannot penetrate to get fresh nourishment. To make us grow, it is a good thing that we do not always remain in one position.

And, moreover, I believe that *our moves help us to grow in proportion*, for one condition of life may make us grow only in one way. There is one set of trials that we have and they develop a certain set of Graces. Or there is one kind of service that we perform which brings out one special faculty and strengthens and sanctifies it. But God does not want His children to grow so as to have their arms twice as long as their toes! And He does not want the trees of His own right-hand planting to be lop-sided trees, sending all their branches out either toward the East or the West, and having no boughs for the other points of the compass. God would have us to be developed as manhood should be—each faculty and limb and muscle having its fair share of harmonious growth—and the whole keeping up that equilibrium which is characteristic of all God's works.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, you have been in a very comfortable position for a long time and you know that you have never had a trial to test your patience. The result is that you have not any patience! You are very impatient if you have even a little trouble. Now the Lord is going to shift you into a place where you will need a great deal of patience, but He will give it to you! And there is another side of your character of which you know next to nothing—and which none of your friends suppose that you possess—but the Lord is going to bring that out. He has painted one part of your portrait and He is now going to turn His attention, by His blessed Spirit, to another side of it, that it may be seen that you are a representation of all the Graces of the Christian character! You ought to be glad that it is so, for who knows how much of Glory God is about to get from you through this change, which, perhaps, you are looking upon with the greatest possible dread?

Once more, and then I shall have given reason enough why we must expect changes. It may be, Brothers and Sisters, that *we undergo changes in order that we may do more good*. Some Christian, perhaps,

who has long been in one position, has practically brought to Christ all who ever will be brought in by him in that place. I know that it is so with ministers. We sow our seed and we reap our harvest, but it would be very wise of some Brothers if they would just take their sickles and go off to another field—and sow and reap there. After you have been a long while fishing in one pond and have caught all the best of the fish, it will be a weary task to go on fishing there, so, do as a wise angler would do—take your rod and line off to another pond and try there! Changes for God's servants are not at all things for which they ought to be blamed. At least I know some ministers whom I would not blame if they were to make a change. And neither do I think that the people of their charge would be particularly anxious to retain them. It is the same with us in our Christian life. It may be that we have done all the good we can do in our own family at home. Well, then, God is going to put us into another family! It may be that from our present standpoint we are only capable of a certain form of good—so the Lord is going to shift us and make different men and women of us, that we may be fitted for another form of service. And it is a blessed thing to be furnished and equipped for all the work of the Lord, whatever it may be that He commits to our charge.

II. And now, secondly, and very briefly, **THE LORD'S PEOPLE ARE TO BE CAREFUL THAT THEY DO NOT MAKE CHANGES WITHOUT DIVINE AUTHORIZATION**—"The LORD our God spoke unto us in Horeb, saying, You have dwelt long enough in this mountain."

The children of Israel had a fiery cloudy pillar to guide them in their many wanderings. And if the pillar did not move, they stopped. Whether it was a day, or a week, or a month, or a year, they stopped while the pillar stopped. And when the pillar moved, then they moved, even though they had scarcely pitched their tents. And, Brothers and Sisters, let us, also, always seek Divine guidance. Let us put ourselves under the protection of Providence—especially in making changes. Some make changes out of mere love of novelty.

Some make changes because they think that anything new will be better than what they have at present. My dear Brother, you know the temptations that now assail you, so I would not advise you to seek to have a new set, about which you know nothing. My dear Sister, the cross that you have been carrying did not, at first, seem to fit your shoulders, but your shoulders have by degrees become fitted to it, so you had better keep that cross than seek another. There are many people who leap out of the frying pan into the fire, as our old proverb says. They think that things are going to be much better with them as soon as they make a change, but they had better "let well enough alone," as another proverb says, for "as a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place." There have been many people who have changed from side to side, just as sick persons restlessly move to and fro, merely shifting their position, yet all the while keeping their pain. One of the greatest blessings that we can have is a contented mind—if we have that, we shall not be anxious for a change.

Do not change because of a mere whim—let not that be your reason for altering your position. Do not change from worldly motives and be not always seeking the best for yourself. Do not change because of distrust, or because of anger with your God. If He bids you stand where you are, stand there and die at your post if necessary. But if He bids you go, then go, though it would make a tear as if your very heart were cut in two. It will be better for you thus to suffer than to disobey your Lord. We do not make many mistakes in life where we absolutely give ourselves up to God's guidance because, though we do not hear a voice speaking out of the oracle, and we have not our way mapped out for us as on a chart, yet, somehow or other, if we are honestly seeking to do right and yet are about to make a mistake, God graciously interposes and prevents the mistake! Or He overrules what evidently was a mistake in such a way that it turns out to be the right thing, after all. Commit your way unto the Lord! Trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass. You are not fatherless. You are not left without a Guide. Poor tempest-tossed and weather-beaten boat, you still have a Helmsman! You are not a derelict left to drift upon the sea at the mercy of every current and every gale. There is within you, O Believer, One who is strong of hand and keen of eye who steers you through the fiercest storms and direst tumults of the sea, making even these to contribute to your progress towards the desired haven! Be not swift to change because of any reason of your own, but be not slow to change if God bids you do so. When the time comes and you have dwelt long enough in this mountain, up with the stakes, roll up the tent lines and put the canvas on the camel's back and be off to the next place which the Lord has marked out for you, for He has gone before you to prepare your way!

III. I will not dwell longer upon that topic, but pass on to notice that THERE ARE SOME PLACES, SPIRITUALLY, IN WHICH GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE DWELT QUITE LONG ENOUGH. I wish to speak to the heart of everyone here—take home what belongs to you and may the Spirit of God be pleased to apply it to your soul!

Some of you know that you are not happy and that you lack something, but you do not know what it is that you lack. Some of you used to be very happy, at one time, in the pleasures of the world, but, somehow, either they have changed or else you have. You now have an empty space in your heart and you cannot fill it. The glass seems to have come off the world's amusements and your businesses, which used to occupy you from morning to night, has become distasteful to you. You feel that you needed something, but you do not know what that something is. Let me tell you that what you really need is your God. Surely you have lived long enough without Him! You have lived long enough in sin. You have lived long enough in impenitence. You have lived long enough in danger of the wrath to come! O prodigal son, your Father calls you to come home! You surely have had enough of riotous living, enough of the swine-trough and the company of the hogs, enough of the citizens of that country and their scorn and cruelty, enough of rags and enough of the husks that the

swine feed upon. Say right now, "I will arise and go to my Father!" And if you say this, the Spirit of God helping you to do so, this very hour you shall be in the embrace of your God, you shall receive the kisses of His love, the best robe shall be put upon you and you shall be welcomed home even as the prodigal in the parable was!

The mountain mentioned in our text was Mount Horeb, or Sinai—the mountain that burned with fire, the mountain around which they set boundaries so that if so much as a beast touched the mountain, it would be stoned or thrust through with a dart! It was that mountain from which they heard the thunder pealing while the Law of God was being proclaimed in a voice so terrible that they entreated that they might not hear it anymore! I believe there are some here—I had almost said that I *hope* there are—who have been long standing at the foot of Sinai. You have heard the thunder of that dreadful voice and you have felt condemned. Your soul is in bondage even now. If ever there was a slave in this world, you are one. You have the fetters on you and you have the cruel whip perpetually flagellating your conscience! Sometimes other slaves have rest, but you get none—you are tortured and tormented—you are almost like the fiend, himself, when he walked through dry places seeking rest and finding none!

Well do I remember when I was in your present condition and I was in it, oh, so long! And blessed was the day when my Lord said to me, "You have dwelt long enough in this mountain," and then I came to Calvary and the blood of sprinkling, and I had done with Sinai! Yet I have never felt regret that I lingered so long at the foot of Sinai. I shall regret it if any of you do so, but I do not regret it in my own case because I think it was necessary for one who was to be a public teacher, that he should have more depression of spirit and more trials than anybody else—so that he might know the ins and outs of this matter in his own experience and so be able to help others who may be tortured in a similar way. But there is no reason why you, my Friend, should have this experience, for it may be that you are not to be a public teacher and it would be well for you if, this very moment, the spirit of bondage were cast out of you and the Spirit of adoption took possession of your soul! You need not remain at the foot of Sinai, for, as I found out, *there is another hill called Calvary*. You need not listen to the threats of the Law, for there is another voice—the voice of the blood of Jesus—"which speaks better things than that of Abel." If you will, by simple faith, but listen to that voice, you will learn that it speaks peace, not punishment, and cries out for mercy, not for justice! O tempted, distressed, despairing soul, you have dwelt long enough in Mount Sinai! At this glad hour, the silver trumpet proclaims a Jubilee for you! Your inheritance, which you have forfeited, has been redeemed and you, yourself, once sold into slavery, are now freed, for the price of your redemption has been paid to the utmost farthing!

There is another mountain, a little further on, to which some of my friends have come—*the mountain of Little Faith*. They do now believe in God. They have looked to Jesus and have been lightened, yet they still

see men as trees walking. Now and then they have high days and holidays and then they know whom they have believed and have great joy in the Lord! But at other times, they get down in the dumps and sing—or rather, moan—

**“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?’”**

Some of these are the very best people in the world and I would sooner see a man always doubling his interest in Christ and walking humbly and carefully before God than presuming upon his own safety and getting proud—and then venturing into temptation and falling into sin! There are some of God’s children who are truly His, but who seem to be like those flowers that grow best in shady places. If they had too much sunshine, I do not know what might become of them. But these people do not allow themselves that luxury. They are constantly troubled. They say that they believe, yet the petition always has to be added, “Lord, help our unbelief!”

Now, my Brother or my Sister, if you are in this condition, do you not think that you have dwelt long enough in this mountain? I knew you when you used to be raising such doubts and questions five years ago. Is it not time that you abandoned that bad habit? You never complain of a baby for cutting its teeth and you do not wonder if it has a lot of little complaints while it is a baby, but you do not expect it to cut its teeth and to have all these little infantile diseases when it gets to be a man! Do you not think that it is time that you had grown from being little children to become young men? And should not the young men begin to grow into fathers in the Christian Church? We watch and tend you while you are the lambs of the flock, but are you always going to be lambs? You, who are forty, fifty, 60 years of age and who ought to set an example to others by being courageous and full of confidence, are you always going to be Feeble-Minds and Ready-to-Halts? What? Are you always going to use crutches? Will you never outgrow them? Must we always wheel you about in a baby carriage of rich consolation? Will you never walk alone? Will you never outgrow your days of weakness? You have dwelt long enough and far too long in this mountain! Remember that Jesus Christ declared that He had come that His people “might have life.” Well, you have that, have you not? But He added, “and that they might have it *more abundantly*.” You have not *that*—do not rest satisfied until you have it!

There is another company of professors—men of brain, but with less heart than brain—men of the Thomas order who need a great deal of evidence to convince them—who tarry *in the Mountain of Questioning*. We have some persons of this kind, who, we trust, are Christians, but they always have some question to ask—and they come to see the pastor about it. And after that one is answered, they ask another, and then another and another. We are very glad to see them so thoughtful—we

wish everybody was thoughtful and we do not want people to take things for granted just because we say them—we like to have them enquiring. But these people are always enquiring and they seem to have been always enquiring! If I have lost my way on a foggy night, I do not mind enquiring, but I like to move on a little and not stand still and keep on enquiring which is the way! There are some people who are always in a fog and always enquiring—and every new heresy that is started gives them a new set of enquiries! It is a wretched life that they lead, themselves, and other people, too—and I may well say to them, “You have dwelt long enough in this mountain.”

Just think, my Christian Brother, while you have been vainly trying to find out how many angels can stand on the point of a needle, your Brother has been winning souls for Jesus Christ! You have been sitting up at night seeking to discover the meaning of the tenth toe of the great image mentioned in the book of Daniel and of the little horn and the fourth beast! And you have been puzzling yourself as to what is going to happen at a certain period of the world’s history, but you have not found out much yet. Now, if you had been visiting the sick, the poor and the ignorant, and going after the lost sheep of the house of Israel, would not your occupation have been much more remunerative? Would it not have brought you a brighter crown at the Last Great Day? Enquire, certainly, as to all Truth of God revealed in the Scriptures, but many of you have already dwelt quite long enough in that Mountain of Questioning! It is time that you had ascertained that there are some things that are settled! I spoke with a man some time ago who said that he made his creed every week. I thought that he must be a disciple of the moon, though I did not call him a lunatic, yet he was very like one, and you might as well measure the moon for a suit of clothes as judge such a man by the creed which he is constantly changing!

Oh, but there are some things about which we are sure! And I bless God that some of us can say that the Gospel which we preached more than 20 years ago is precisely the same Gospel that we preach now! We are not conscious of having shifted our ground with regard to any of its doctrines, precepts, warnings, or invitations! It is a grand thing when an old Divine is able to say, as my own dear grandfather said to me not long before he died, “For 60 years I have preached the Gospel. And the sermon that I preached the first time I went into the pulpit, I could have preached the last time I went there, for I have made no alteration in my sentiments. The Truths that God taught me at the beginning, I have held fast, though I have been continually learning more and more of the meaning of them.” It is very necessary, though, if we are to do any good to others, that we go to the Mountain of Enquiry for a while, that we should feel that there comes a time when we have made up our minds and have learned something which we never mean to question again—we have dwelt long enough in that mountain!

At Horeb, Moses divided the people and marshaled them and said that such-and-such a tribe should go first, and another second, and another

last. He drilled them as an army, yet they were not always to be content with being marshaled and drilled—they were to go forward and possess the land of Canaan! They had dwelt long enough in that *mountain of marshalling and drilling*, and some of you Christian people have had quite enough marshalling and drilling! Is it not time for those of you who are not doing anything for Christ, to begin to do something for Him? I do not think that when a young man is converted, he ought, at first, to begin working for Jesus Christ as the main business of his life. He should go to Christ's school and try to learn something that he can afterwards talk about to others. I was very pleased with a dear Brother, a working man, who joined the church here a month or two ago. When I put to him the question, "What are you doing for Christ?" he said, "Well, Sir, I have the heart to do a good deal and I hope I shall yet do it, but, at the present time I am trying to learn more about Him, for, if I were to go and speak to some of my mates about Jesus Christ, they would be more than a match for me and I should not like to have my Savior made a subject of ridicule." I thought there was sanctified common sense in that answer and I would advise other young Christians to go and do likewise—only do not forget to serve your Master when you have learned the way to do it! You, Mr. Recruit, have surely practiced "the goose step" long enough—can you not now go forward? To my certain knowledge you have been in the army for a dozen years—could you not do a little fighting if you were to try? Could you not learn to load a gun and fire it? Have you been studying the properties of gunpowder all this time and done nothing else to prove that you are a soldier? Shame on you!

I fear that the Church of Christ as a whole has been tarrying far too long in the Mountain of Marshalling and Drilling. Some clever Brother draws up a fine plan and the next thing is to form a committee, with a president and a vice-president and all manner of officers. You are getting on, now, like a house afire and that is how the thing usually ends—in smoke! There is the paraphernalia. There is the marshalling. There is the grand parade and there is the army—on paper! But when will the army begin the battle in real earnest? When will the Church of Christ get to close quarters with sinners? When will every Christian man and woman really begin working for Christ and cease talking about it? We have had the resolutions which have been proposed and seconded—and carried unanimously—and then forgotten! It is significant that there is no book containing the resolutions of the Apostles, but we have the *Acts of the Apostles*! And there will be something worth recording in the Lord's "Book of Remembrance" if we turn our good resolutions into acts of holy service. Let us get to work, for we have tarried long enough in this mountain!

There are many other "mountains" that I might mention, but I do not think I need to do so. Unto whatever Truth of God you have attained, dear Friend, make sure of that and then go on to something beyond. Do not stop anywhere, for you have not yet attained, neither are you yet perfect. You can buy a box of the patent perfection paint and cover over

all the knots and imperfections in the wood, but the wind and the rain will test your fine looking house and you will find the paint cracking and the bad joints and the holes in the wood showing before long. At least it is so with me in a spiritual sense. Imperfections will reveal themselves very soon and the paint will not answer after all. But, Brother, never be satisfied with yourself, for self-satisfaction is the end of all progress.

A painter said to his wife, one morning, "I shall never paint again." "Why, my husband?" asked the good woman. "Because the picture that I have just finished perfectly satisfies me—it realizes my ideal and, therefore, I know that, now, my genius is exhausted." When a man says, "Yes, I am a splendid fellow. I will tell everybody what I am, only I will do it very cunningly and say this is what Divine Grace has done for me. I will thank God for it, for the Pharisee in the Temple had Grace enough to do that!" Then depend upon it, Brother, the very power to grow has gone from you, for, if you were growing, you would have growing pains! You would feel like the chick in the egg that needs to get out. Oh, how often my soul feels cribbed, cabined and confined within my imperfect self! She will get completely free one day and, in anticipation of that blessed time, I joyously sing—

***“Welcome, sweet hour of full discharge,
That sets my longing soul at large,
Unbinds my chains, breaks up my cell,
And gives me with my God to dwell!”***

Till that “sweet hour” arrives when you will dwell with God forever, do not delude yourself with the notion that you have got where you may stop. “Forward, onward,” must still be your motto! O eagle of God, if you are of the true royal breed, though you have looked the very sun in the face with undimmed eyes and soared till you have left the clouds far below you, yet still higher, higher, higher must you soar! If you could distance the sun, himself, and reach a yet more distant orb, still higher, higher must you soar! “Excelsior” is the motto of every Christian until, at last, he comes into the very Presence of his God and sees Him face to face! You never see an eagle roosting upon a thorn bush and saying, “I can get no higher.” And if any of God’s birds of paradise do that, I would bid them beware of the fowler! My self-satisfied Brother, he is after you and his big net will enclose you if you are not careful! Mount higher, Brother! Higher yet, for however high you have ascended, you have dwelt long enough in that mountain and must advance to something higher and still better! May God help you to do so for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—741, 703, 850.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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FORTY YEARS

NO. 1179

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 14, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For the Lord your God has blessed you in all the works of your hands:
He knows your walking through this great wilderness: these
forty years the Lord your God
has been with you; you have lacked nothing.”
Deuteronomy 2:7.***

THE habit of numbering our days is a very admirable one. To do it rightly a man needs to be taught of God and if we have not been so taught, it is well to offer the prayer, “So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” Some men number their cattle, number their acres, number their pounds, but do not number their days, or, if they do, they fail to draw the inference from them which both reason and Divine Grace suggest—that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. It is not wisdom to try to seem younger than you are, though I have known many attempt it. I have marked between census and census that the ages of certain persons have hardly increased 10 years, as I thought they would have done by the lapse of time. The age of many whom we admire is an inscrutable mystery.

What there can be to be ashamed of in advancing years I am at a loss to know, for old age commands reverence—not ridicule. Why sorrow because another year of trial is over, another year of labor ended, another milestone on the road to Heaven left behind? Instead of regretting that we are so far on the voyage to the fair haven, we may rather rejoice and make our years, at least, as many as we can. If we pretend to be more juvenile than we are, uncharitable persons may possibly attribute it to vanity—it is a pity to give them such an opportunity.

At the same time, ripe years are not to be trifled with. We have known some who have treated the fact that they are advancing in life with unbecoming levity—their gray hairs show that they are nearing the bounds of life, but they are as thoughtless as if they were yet in their minority—and so they are an incongruous miniature of the weakness of age and the frivolity of youth. It is well to keep a cheerful heart to the last hour—and no man has so much reason for doing so as a believer in Jesus! But, at the same time, it is surely time to be solemnly earnest when one has passed the prime of life. Wisdom dictates, in old age, if never before, that a grave consideration of eternal earth should be more under foot and Heaven should be more in the heart.

Every year should increase our sense of the certainty, value and nearness of eternal things. “Tis time to live if I grow old.” Works for God among our fellow men will soon be impossible to us—let us be diligent in them while as yet our sun is above the horizon. Now, if ever, we should redeem the time, because the days are evil. In the very middle of life, when

strength is in our bones and we have the most grand possibilities of vigorous service, it is well for us to be fully alive to the highest interests and purposes. We should not be spending a dreamy existence, as if we were mere lotus eaters, born into a garden of poppies to sleep all day. We have something better to do than to flit among the flowers like butterflies, with nothing particular to care about, and no eternal future within the range of our thoughts or hopes.

My purpose, this morning, is to speak as a man of 40 years to others of my own standing. But much which is spoken will be appropriate to my seniors and applicable, also, to the younger ones of my audience. Forty years of mercy suggest many thoughts concerning *the past*, teach much that will be of use to us for *the present* and, I think, should influence us aright as to *the future*.

I. First, then, let us look back upon THE PAST in the light of the text. "The Lord your God has blessed you in all the works of your hands: He knows your walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the Lord your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing." What strikes me in Moses' review is this, the *prominence which he gives to God in it*. Here let me note that our own retrospect of the past, will, if we are genuine Christians, have in it many bright lights of the conspicuous Presence of God, making the pathway here and there like holy ground! The ungodly man, of course, leads a godless life—as God is not in all his thoughts, so God does not appear to him in all his ways—but to the godly, God's hand is plain.

Look back, Believer, and note that to you the existence of God has not been a *theory*, but a fact observed and verified by actual experience. Can you not recall many occasions in which the Lord has as certainly manifested Himself to you as ever He appeared to Moses in the burning bush, or to Joshua outside the walls of Jericho, or to Solomon by night, or to the three holy children in the fiery furnace? Do you not remember that marvelous revelation of Himself to you when you were converted? What hand was that which took the rein and curbed that stubborn will of yours? Could any power less than Omnipotent have so completely turned the course of your life? Do you remember the consecrated hour when Jesus met with you, absolved you from the past and accepted you as His disciple?

Ah, they may tell us there are no miracles nowadays, but to each Christian his own conversion is a conspicuous miracle and will ever so remain! He will never be able to forget that then he came into actual contact with the holy God and felt His hand, yes, knew it *beyond* feeling, for it was not a matter of the senses—his spirit came directly into actual contact with the Eternal Spirit and our soul was bound up in the bundle of life with the Soul of the Lord our God! With some of us, many days have passed since then, but they have brought with them fuller displays of the Divine power. In examples of communion, have we not spoken with the Lord as a man speaks with his friend, if not absolutely face to face, yet marvelously like it? Have we not had answers to prayer which we dare not tell because they are too marvelous for others to believe, though they are treasured memories to ourselves?

It would be casting pearls before swine to speak to the ungodly of the Lord's unveilings of His face to His beloved ones! These things are secrets of the Lord which are with them that fear Him, things unlawful for a man to utter, but never to be erased from our memories! Have we not passed through remarkable circumstances in which the right hand of the Lord has been as clearly seen as our troubles, themselves? "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him." Brought, perhaps, by our own fault into "rare difficulties," we have seen a plain path before us in answer to prayer. Plunged into the sea, like Jonah, by our own waywardness, yet we have been carried safely to the dry land to sing, "Salvation is of the Lord."

These 40 years we look back upon with sacred delight, tracing the wells of Elim and the fruit-bearing palms, the pools in the valley of Baca and the places of encampment in the desert! And if to nobody else, certainly to us, there is an overruling Providence and a bountiful God! We have been like Hagar in the wilderness, ready to perish, but Jehovah has shown us a well of refreshment. And we have said, "Then God sees me." Blessed is the name of the Lord for this! Let us magnify Him, this morning, that our life has not been without dashes of Glory from His loving Presence! Our Shepherd has not left us to wander alone. Our heavenly Friend has been better to us than a brother and has manifested Himself unto us as He does not unto the world. In this we will glory. Even as Paul gloried in the Revelation which he had received, so also will we rejoice in the displays of the Divine favor which we have beheld.

In reading over the retrospect of 40 years in the wilderness which the text contains, notice, next, that a very leading point is *the blessing which God gave*. I have read this verse over a great many times to discover any allusion to the sin of Israel, but I cannot perceive any, for it begins, "The Lord your God has blessed you in all the works of your hands." It *deals not with man's sin*, but with God's *blessing*. As with Israel, so with us! In our life the most remarkable fact has been the blessing of God. He has blessed as with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. He has blessed us all ways and blessed us always. He has blessed us beyond conception, blessed us exceeding abundantly above what we asked or even thought and beyond what we can now remember! He has blessed us like a God.

Our text says He has blessed all the works of our hand. I suppose that alludes to all that Israel had a right to do. The Lord multiplied their cattle. He increased their substance. He guided them in their marches. He protected them in their encampments. There were some things in which He did not bless them. They wanted to go up into the Promised Land against His commandment and the Amalekites smote them—He did not bless them there. I thank God, this morning, Brothers and Sisters, that He does not bless the *sins* of His people, for if He did, it would bring on them the tremendous curse of being happy in the ways of evil! We have made our mistakes, and for those mistakes the Lord has laid His hand on us, armed with a rod, which has chastened us and restored us to the path of righteousness.

But in what was legitimate and right we have, some of us, to record that the Lord has uniformly blessed the work of our hands. The work of some of us has been to preach His Gospel, and if the Lord had given us a

few score conversions we would have loved Him forever. But inasmuch as He has given us thousands upon thousands of conversions, how shall we find language with which to praise Him? He has blessed the work of our hands so that a vast Church has been gathered and many smaller ones have sprung from it. One enterprise has been taken up, and then another. One labor which seemed beyond our power has been achieved, and then another and yet another! And at His feet we lay the crown. I must confess very special favor of the Lord towards me—the very stones in the street would cry out against me if I did not—He has, indeed, blessed all the work of my hands.

Brothers and Sisters, you have had a share in the blessing and have a share, also, in the praising. Sometimes the work of our hands has appeared to crumble to pieces, but then it has been rebuilt before long in a better style. Enemies have arisen and they have been exceedingly violent, only to fulfill some special purpose of God and increase our blessing against their wills. Sickness has come only to yield discipline—we have been made weak that we might be strong—and brought to death's door that we might know more of the Divine Life. Glory be to God, our life has been all blessing from beginning to end! There has been no exceptional event all along—ever since we knew Him, He has dealt out blessing and blessing and blessing—and never a syllable of curses. He has fulfilled to us the Word, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you."

Again, Brothers and Sisters, in our retrospect of the past, we should notice the perfection of the Lord's sympathetic care. Observe the words—"He knows your walking through this great wilderness." He has known our rough paths and our smooth ways, the weary trudging and the joyous marches. He has known it all, and not merely known it in the sense of Omniscience, but known it in the sense of sympathy. As David puts it—"You have known my soul in adversity." You have tenderly entered into my griefs and woes. You have borne my burdens and my cares. What do you say, Brothers and Sisters, has it not been so? Is not that witness true—"in all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the angel of His Presence saved them"? Is not this also true—"I have made and I will bear, even I will carry"? "He bore them on eagle's wings and brought them to Himself." Has He not often done so? And have we not to sing, today, of a dear Father's love, so tender, so considerate that we can only wonder at it, and love in return?

You have had great losses, some of you. The dearest ones on earth, for whom you sorrowed much and justly, have been removed. Heart-breaking bereavements have happened, yet your hearts are not broken—neither are you cast down with too much sorrow—because underneath you are the everlasting arms and, "as your days so has your strength been." Before some of you many doors have shut, but God has opened others. The brook Cherith has been dried, but there has been sustenance found for you in the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil somewhere else. Let us bless the generous sympathy which has known all our wandering through this great wilderness!

But I must pass on. We have had, also, what is better than this during our 40 years—*the special Presence of God*. “These forty years the Lord your God has been with you.” Adored be His name for that! He has not been ashamed to be with us though we have been despised and ridiculed. Whenever we have prayed we have had audience with Him. When we have worked, we have seen His mysterious hand working with us. When we have trembled, we have felt the tender arms sustaining us. When we have been in bodily pain, He has made our bed in our sickness. When we have felt the fiery furnace of trial, He has kept us alive amidst the glowing coals, delivering us from even the *smell* of fire by His own Presence. The best of all is God with us, and in this sign we conquer!

Again, we have had much cause to bless the Lord for *the abundance of His supplies*. Note those four words, “You have lacked nothing.” Some things which we could have wished for we have not received and we are glad they were denied us. Children would have too many sweets if they could and then they could become ill. We have not been pampered with dangerous dainties, but we have received necessities and have lacked nothing. Walking on in the path of Providence, trusting in the Lord, what have we lacked? We have known a few pinches, even as the children of Israel lacked water for the moment, but very soon were refreshed with water from the Rock. We may have needed bread for an hour, as they did when they were wicked enough to say, “Has the Lord brought us out of Egypt that we may die in the wilderness?” but the clouds, before long, dropped with a mysterious shower of food for them! And before long Providence has supplied us, also.

Our times of straitness have been occasions for appeal to the faithful promise and we have never appealed in vain. “You have lacked nothing.” “No good thing will God withhold from them that walk uprightly.” Everything that would be, in the fullest sense, a “good thing,” God has given us! If it would be a good thing that we should never again be tempted. If it were a good thing that the devil were buried. If it were a good thing for us to go to Heaven at once—we should have all these things! But then there are certain far-reaching purposes to be answered—and to reach them the Lord makes even evils work for the highest good in the ultimate issues of His grand designs. We ought to magnify the Lord that we have lacked nothing. Oh for a song of praise for 40 years of mercies—some of you can say 60 and 70 years of mercies! Praise Him, all you saints! “Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!”

II. But now, Brothers and Sisters, we must take the second head, which is—forty years in the wilderness should teach us much of service for the PRESENT. I do not say that it will do so, for we do not all grow wiser as we grow older, but it *ought* to be so. Some of us were born with fools’ caps which we find hard to pull off. Folly is bound up in the heart of many a man and it takes much of the rod to whip it out of him. Experience is a noble teacher, but we are dull scholars. But, at any rate, we ought to have learned to *continue trusting in God*. After 40 years of the goodness of your Covenant God, do you mean to look to an arm of flesh, my Brethren?

You have been so kindly treated by your Master and Savior, would you now leave Him for earthly friendship? Do you need a better God? Do you desire a better confidence? Merchants generally continue in that business which pays them well, for they feel that they might go elsewhere and fare worse. "Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you." Plow this field, Brother, you will never reap such a harvest anywhere else. Dig in this mine—there is no such gold elsewhere, for the gold of this land is good, and its wealth brings no sorrow with it. As Boas said to Ruth, so I say to you, "Glean not in any other field." When Noah was in the ark the Lord shut him in—may He shut you in so fast that you may never leave your confidence in Jesus. "Trust in the Lord forever."

You have found yourselves so blessed and benefited by trusting in Him up to now, stand fast in it and be not moved away from the hope of your calling. Be not so foolish, having been in the Spirit, as to seek to be made perfect by the flesh! Having walked so far, and so safely, by faith, do not attempt to walk by sight, or by the deeds of the Law. Having found that to trust in the Lord is better than to put confidence in princes, do not fawn at the feet of the proud. You have lived well enough upon the bread of your Father's house, do not desire the delicate morsels of those who please the flesh. Stand fast in the liberty in which Christ has made you free and shun the yoke of bondage. You should at least have learned this from 40 years' experience of the blessedness of resting in the Lord.

Experience should also give us *greater ease in confiding in the Lord*. Divine Grace has given you, in very deed, a real second nature, and this, by use, should have grown stronger and more prevalent. Faith is an untried path when we begin, but after so many years of testing God in all sorts of ways, in all kinds of circumstances, it ought now to be as easy to confide in the Lord as it is for a child to trust in a tender parent. Is it so? I fear not. Our long-trying confidence in God ought not now to be staggered by a little difficulty, as it was at the first. When fresh-water sailors first go to sea, every capful of wind frightens them. And if the vessel lurches a little, they cry, "She will certainly roll over." But the old sailor, who knows what a storm means, thanks God for the wind, for it will drive the ship more rapidly into port! He never minds a lurch or two—he has his sea legs by this time!

And so men who have been blessed of God for 40 years ought to be equally at ease. We should be able to say, "I do trust Him and I will. I must believe Him—why should I doubt Him?" Nothing has ever occurred, as far as I am concerned, for 40 years, which could justify me in a mistrust of my God. And if, beloved Brethren, you and I never doubt our God till we have a reason to, we shall dwell in the unbroken rest of faith! Let the roots of faith take stronger hold, that like a cedar in Lebanon it may smile at the tempest. Forty years of Divine faithfulness should teach us, also, a *surer, quicker, calmer and more joyous expectation of immediate aid in all times of strait and trial*—we should learn not to be flurried and worried because the herds are cut off from the stall and the harvest is withered, for we know from abundant proofs that, "The Lord will provide."

Have we come to a dead lift? Let us bless God for it, for now He will make bare His arm! He would have left you to lift your load if you could

have lifted it, but now your extremity has come, His opportunity has come, also. I am often glad when I feel that none but my Lord can carry me through, for I am certain of His help. If we have, still, a batch of dough in the kneading trough which we brought out of Egypt, the windows of Heaven will not yet be opened. But when the last little cake has been baked, the manna will fall around the camp. As long as we can feel the bottom of the river we have not reached the best waters to swim in. When the barley loaves and the few small fishes are all broken, then the miracle of multiplying begins. My Brothers and Sisters, watch and wait for the Lord, and *expect* Him as confidently as you look for light at the hour of dawn. Far sooner may the sun forget his rising than the Lord forget His promise to succor His people in the hour of need. "My Soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him."

Forty years of blessing should teach each of us *to believe in holy activity*. "The Lord your God has blessed you in all the works of your hands." Some people believe in God's blessing the dreams and theories of their *heads* and their prayers are unattended by action. They believe in His blessing them when they are scheming and putting fine plans on paper, or when they meet at a conference to talk about how to do Christian work. I believe in God's blessing the actual *works* of our hands—He waters not the seed which we *talk* of sowing, but that which we actually *scatter*. If people believed in this and just did one tenth of what they propose, it would be much better than the endless leagues of tasking and religious dissipation which threaten to become the bane of the Church. The schemes for evangelizing districts, towns, cities and the whole world, are so very numerous that there is no need to make any more—and were half the time thus vainly spent given to diligent *labor*—there would be much more of a blessing bestowed upon the sons of men!

Meet and confer by all means, but do not think that this is a very great matter for congratulation. The real winning of souls is far better. In business you will find, as a rule, that you will not get much more than you really work for. And you will find, in the things of God, that the blessing comes to diligence, zeal, earnestness and painstaking, for God blesses the works of our hands. Men of 40, it is time for us to be fully at work! Moses was 40 years old when he went down to visit his brethren in Egypt. Then he tried to turn, to practical use, the former 40 years of education in Pharaoh's court—and though he had to wait 40 more years—it was no fault of his.

Joshua said, "Forty years was I when Moses sent me to spy out the land." You cannot hope to live as long as these men did and, therefore, it is time to begin earnest work, for you are in your prime and will never be more fit for usefulness. If you have not begun before, let your consecration be at its fullest today. The Lord has blessed what you have done with a right motive—will it not be well to do more? Men in trade, when they find they make gains, increase their business. And when we find God blesses us in what we do, let us do more for Him! We must not slacken our zeal—it is a dreadful thing when men begin to do less while their natural force is unabated—it looks as if their hearts were growing cold. How commonly

do we hear people say, "We have served an apprenticeship at work and now we will leave the younger folks to go on."

Just when you begin to be capable of doing the work well you leave it—and the Lord has to be served by another set of makeshifts. Man alive! Stick to your work as long as you are alive! Surely, work for Jesus deserves our most mature and best instructed years—and it ought not to be left to the mere boys and girls. The young people deserve great credit for taking to the work so heartily, but surely men and women in their prime are none too good to be enlisted, and the fullness of their strength is not too much to expect for Jesus! Brothers and Sisters, 40 years' experience ought to have taught us to *avoid many of the faults into which we fell in our early days*. It is a great pity when advancing age teaches men to avoid their *virtues* rather than their *follies*. It is not at all unusual for zeal to grow chill as men advance in life. "Ah," says the Brother, "I am not so hot-headed as I was." No, Brother, nor yet so *hot-hearted*.

"Ah," says another, "I was very zealous in my time." Is not this, also, your time? Show us, *now*, what your boasted zeal was like, will you? We should be glad to see a specimen of it! Are you not ashamed to confess that you are backsliding in heart? Can you bear the prospect of taking your flight when your heart is in a wintry condition? As you come nearer Heaven ought you not to be more heavenly? A zeal which becomes weaker in proportion to our age looks very much like a merely animal excitement which decays with nature. The earnestness of Divine Grace defies the decline of years and it brings forth fruit in old age to show that the Lord is upright. No, we must learn not to avoid excellencies, but to avoid follies! And where we have burned our fingers once, we must not burn them again, but keep clear of what we now discover to have been excrescences, though perhaps at the time we thought them beauties.

May God grant, dear Friends, in all of us, that, as the Israelites which came out of Egypt died in the wilderness, little by little at each stopping place, so in us may the old Egyptian nature daily die and be buried. Have you ever thought of it? The march of the children of Israel could have been tracked in the wilderness by their graves—there remained a cemetery wherever there had been an encampment. Blessed be God, our march to Heaven may be traced by graves, too, for we die daily if we are in a right state and the old man is crucified with Christ, and we obey the command, "mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth." Blessed shall the day be when the last "grave shall have been dug and the last evil passion shall have been buried forever, and the new race—the new Israel—shall enter into the promised land!

Beloved, there is another thing which 40 years suggest to me. You will have observed that the text mentions twice "The Lord your God." All through the chapter it is always that—"Jehovah your God." Here we have mention of His Covenant relationship in which He is ever most dear to us. Shall we not, at this time, *renew our own personal covenant and take our God to be ours afresh*? We read that Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebecca. Let us have a new wedding day, ourselves, and give ourselves over again to the Husband of our souls, even Jesus the Well-Beloved. Are you tired of your Lord, any of you? Do you wish to sue for a

divorce? “No,” you say, “No, no. But would God I were more enamored of Him, and that my whole self were more completely His.” Let this be a day of re-consecration—

**“Tis done—the great transaction’s done!
I am my Lord’s and He is mine:
He drew me and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine.
High Heaven that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Until in life’s latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear.”**

May that be the case with each one of us. May we offer ourselves anew to Jehovah this day and take Father, Son and Holy Spirit to be our God forever and ever!

III. A great deal more might be said, but we have not time and, therefore, we must go on to the third head, which concerns THE FUTURE. Having come so far on our journey as to have reached 40 years, we are bound to feel a powerful influence upon us as to the future. How? I will borrow our remarks from the context. Read in the second chapter, second verse, “And the Lord spoke unto me, saying, You have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward.” What way was northward, then? Why, toward Canaan! Forty years wandering up and down in the wilderness is enough, now turn your faces towards Canaan and *march heavenward*.

Beloved Friends, it is time we all had our faces turned heavenward more completely. We have not always had our conversation in Heaven as we should have. Some of our faculties have been taken up with inferior things and we have looked towards Egypt. But we have compassed this mountain long enough—it is time, now, that we concentrate all our powers and turn them all straight away to the Zion which is above, and to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of the just made perfect! Our window should now be opened towards Jerusalem! Forty years of the world, why it is 40 years of banishment! And, as we are soon to have done with it, let us up and away to the hills of frankincense!

They tell me that when sailors, years ago, used to go to India, they would give as a toast when they left, “To our friends astern.” But when they had reached half way on the voyage they changed it—it was, “To our friends ahead.” When we get to 40 we may reckon we are probably more than mid-way on our voyage. We are bound, therefore, to remember our friends ahead. We have a large company waiting for us of dear ones that have gone before us. Indeed, the aged have a majority of their friends on the other side of the Jordan. Let us salute them—

**“Even now by faith we join our hands
With those that went before,
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
Upon the eternal shore.”**

Let us pledge our friends ahead and, from now on let us forget the things that are behind and press forward to that which is before—leaving earth and earthly matters more and more—and yielding ourselves more fully to the cords which draw us towards the celestial country. Let us begin more fully that holy, happy, praiseful life which is akin to that of Heaven! Is not this a good suggestion? The time past may suffice us to have worked the

will of the flesh, now let us cry, "heavenward, ho!" Pull up the anchor, spread the sails and let us go away to the fair country where Jesus has gone before us!

The next thing we should learn is *indifference to this world's heritage*. The next verse says, "You are to pass through the coast of your brethren, the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir, and they shall be afraid of you; take you good heed unto yourselves, therefore: meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession." Esau sold his heritage and had his mess of pottage—let him have it—you keep the birthright and never think of putting your spoon into his mess. The world is for worldlings. What do you want with it? God does not intend you to have your portion in *this* life—why do you lust after it? He has appointed a better rest for you—are you not content to have it so? Perhaps the Israelites would have liked to have taken Edom. "No," says God, "Edom is not yours. Canaan is yours. Go on—do not meddle with Esau's cities."

When you see worldlings very happy in their mirth, do not envy them! Let them have their portion. I never envy a horse his oats and his beans—he likes them and I could not eat them—why should I wish to be a dog in the manger? There are pleasures in this world for men of the world. Poor things, let them have them. As for you, you do not need them and cannot enjoy them! Let them alone and do not meddle with them. If you can bless them, do so, but by no means allow them to imagine that you envy them, for your position is infinitely better than theirs. Better to be God's dog than the devil's darling. The bad estate of the ungodly is far below our lowest condition. When we consider their end, any little envy which might arise at the sight of their prosperity will turn to horror at their doom.

Let us learn from the past to cultivate *independence of spirit*. "You shall buy meat of them for money, that you may eat. And you shall also buy water of them for money, that you may drink." They were not to plunder the country, or make imperious demands. Neither were they to act as paupers and beg anything from Edom. What they needed they were to pay for in good money. The Edomites, no doubt, thought them a mob of escaped slaves, as poor as poverty itself, half starved and miserable. They were to let them see that they were nothing of the kind. They were to pay in full for all they had. It is a grand thing when a man can exhibit the princely independence which Abraham showed towards the king of Sodom. That little potentate said, "Give me the persons and take the goods to yourself." "No," says Abraham, "not I, lest you should say, I have made Abraham rich, I will not take a thread or even a shoe lace from you."

No, Brothers and Sisters, if a man has been helped of God to live for 40 years, lacking nothing, and has walked uprightly, surely it would now be a scandalous thing if he were to do anything whatever which would be questionable as to integrity, or might savor of confidence in man. He is, indeed, a man of God who has learned to walk uprightly and no longer leans upon the creature, nor practices policy to win his way. "Ah," said a minister to me, "if I were to preach in your bold style I should lose some of my richest people and offend the rest." And if he did, would he not have an easy conscience? And is not that worth more than money? The minis-

ter who cares for any man's opinion when he is doing his duty is unworthy of his office!

The servant of God must not be the servant of men. The only man whom God will bless is he who fears no man's face and resolves that whether he offends or pleases, he will clear his soul from the blood of all men—

***“Fearless myself, a dying man,
Of dying man's esteem,
I preach as though
I might never preach again—
A dying man to dying men.”***

Have the Israelites lived for forty years on manna, and shall they bow before the Edomites, and like paupers cry, “Please give us bread”? No, the favored feasters at Heaven's table can afford to say, “We will pay you, we will owe you nothing.” God give you independence of spirit, my Brethren! Many have forgotten what it means—they will do anything for the sake of custom, or credit, or to get into society—and if they grow rich they can no longer attend a Non-conformist place of worship! For the sake of being patted on the back by *nobodies* they give up their fathers' religion and renounce their principles, if, indeed, they ever had any!

Once again, after 40 years in the wilderness God would have His people learn *generosity of spirit*. The Edomites were very much afraid of the Israelites, and would, no doubt, have bribed them to let them alone. But Moses, in effect, says, “Do not take anything from them. You have no need to do so, for you have never lacked anything and God has been with you. They are afraid of you, you might take what you pleased from them, but do not touch even the water from their wells without payment.” Oh, that we had a generous spirit, that we were not for oppressing others in any degree whatever, feeling that we have too much already given us by God to be needing to tax any man for our own gain! The spirit of *freedom from murmuring* should be in us after 40 years of blessing!

Jarchi tells us that this exhortation meant that they were not to pretend to be poor. You know how many do so when it is likely to save their pockets. When the tribes came to the Edomites they were not to say to them, “We are poor people and have no money. You must not charge too much for the water, for we cannot afford to pay you at full rates.” No, no, no! It must not be! Supplied by the infinite God, the children of Heaven dare not pretend to be poor! Yet we find professors doing this all the time! If they have a very good business year, they say, “We have done very middling.” And if trade is rather dull, they cry, “Things are at a dreadful pass! Trade is decreasing, we cannot make a living at all.” Very seldom do I meet with a man who cheerfully confesses, “the Lord is blessing and prospering me and I am perfectly content. I want for nothing but more Divine Grace with which to bless the Lord all day long.”

This is the kind of talk for Christian men! They are princes, let them speak a princely language. To grumble and complain is like a rich man's putting on old and slovenly garments that he may deceive by the presence of need and escape from bearing his due share of the public burdens. The Holy Spirit enables the Believer to boast in the Lord and glory in His name. I am not going to give my Master a bad name. He has treated me

infinitely better than I ever expected or deserved! He is a good God. I feel it to be a good thing to live, since He has accepted me in Christ—and a blessed thing to be on earth—because the Holy Spirit enables me to serve Jesus. I am not going to stand here and find fault with my Lord, or represent myself as a poor miserable wretch, oppressed by a hard taskmaster. My Lord has been good and only good, to me! And I will praise and magnify His name. Where we are poor let us confess it, but where God, in His infinite Grace has made us rich in Christ Jesus, let us glory in it!

Lastly, we ought, for the future, to show *more confidence in God* if we have had 40 years of His love—we should have more confidence in working for Him that He will bless us, more confidence as to our personal weakness that He will strengthen us, more confidence as to the unknown future that through the great and terrible wilderness He will be with us—and that through the last cold stream He will still be our companion! We should have more confidence that we shall behold the light of His Countenance and more confidence as to the supply of all our needs, for as we have lacked nothing, so all things shall be freely supplied till we cross the river and eat the old corn of the land. To gather all up in one word, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!”

Would God you were all His people! Would God you all trusted Him for all things, for those who do so shall find good. The Lord bless you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Deuteronomy 8.

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—
PSALM 23 (VERSION III), 152, 214.**

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CONVERSIONS ENCOURAGED

NO. 1283

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 12, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But if from there you shall seek the Lord your God, you shall find Him, if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in tribulation, and all these things are come upon you, even in the latter days, if you turn to the Lord your God, and shall be obedient unto His voice; (for the Lord your God is a merciful God); He will not forsake you, neither destroy you, nor forget the Covenant of your fathers which He swore unto them.”
Deuteronomy 4:29-31.***

LAST Lord's-Day the title of my discourse was, “Conversions Desired” and my earnest prayer to God has been that the effect of this morning's sermon may be conversions accomplished. I cannot be happy unless I indulge the hope that some will, this morning, turn to God with full purpose of heart, led to do so by the power of Divine Grace. For this I sought the Lord and at this I resolved to aim. I asked myself, “What is the most likely subject in the hand of the Holy Spirit to lead men to the Lord? Shall I preach the terrors of the Lord, or shall I proclaim the sweetness of Divine mercy? Each of these has its proper use, but which will be most likely to answer our design today?”

I remembered the fable of the sun and the wind. These rival powers competed as to which could compel the traveler to cast away his cloak. The wind blew boisterously and tugged at the garment as if it would tear it from the traveler's shoulders, but he buttoned it closer about him and held it firmly with his hands. The battle was not to the strong and threatening. Then the sun burst forth from behind a cloud, when the wind had ceased its blustering, and smiled upon the traveler with warmth of kindness until he loosened his cloak and, by-and- by, was glad to take it off altogether. The soft, sweet influence of the sun had vanquished where the storm had raged in vain.

So I thought, perhaps if I preach the tender mercy of God and His readiness to forgive, it may be to my hearers as the warm beams of the sun to the traveler and they will cast away the garments of their sin and self-righteousness. I know that the arrows of love are keen and wound many hearts which are invulnerable to the sword of wrath. O that these sacred darts may win the victory this day! When ships at sea apprehend a storm they will gladly make for an open harbor, but if it is doubtful whether they can enter the port, they will rather weather the tempest than run the risk of being unable to enter the harbor's mouth.

Some havens can only be entered when the tide happens to be at the flood and, therefore, the captain will not venture. But when the welcome signals are flying and it is clear that there is plenty of water and that they

may safely run behind the breakwater, they hesitate no longer, but make sail for the shelter. Let seeking souls know, this day, that the Lord's harbor of refuge is open, the port of Free Grace can be reached, that there is sea room for the largest transgressor and love enough to float the greatest sinner into port! Ho, weather-beaten vessels, you may come and welcome! There is no need that even for a solitary hour you should run the risk of the tempest of almighty wrath! You are invited to find shelter and to enjoy it NOW!

It is rather singular that having these ideas floating in my mind and desiring to preach Free Grace and abounding mercy, that I should have found my text in Deuteronomy. Why, that is a book of the *Law* and is plentifully besprinkled with terrible threats! And yet I find a Gospel theme in it, yes, and one of the very richest! As I read it I admired it for its connection as well as for its own fullness. It seems to me so pleasant to find this lily among thorns. As in the wintry months of the opening year one finds a crocus smiling up from the cold soil and in its golden cup offers a taste of the sunlight which summer will more fully bring, so amid the uncongenial pages of the Law I see this precious Gospel declaration which, like the spring flower, assures us that God's love is yet alive and will bring us happier times.

My thoughts also likened this passage to the water which leaped from the smitten rock, for the Law is like a rock and the Pentateuch is hard and stern as granite. But here, in its very heart, we find a crystal spring of which the thirsty may drink! I likened the text, also, to the manna lying on the desert sand, the bread of Heaven glittering like a shining pearl upon the barren soil of the wilderness. Here amid the fiery statutes of the Law and the terrible judgments threatened by the God of Sinai, you see this manna of mercy dropped about your tents this morning, as fresh, I hope, to you as if but newly fallen. May you eat of it and live forever!

Let us come to our text at once. The Lord, here, encourages sinners to turn to Himself and find abundant Grace. He encourages sinners who had violated His plainest commandments, who had made idols and so had corrupted themselves—and had, consequently, been visited with captivity and other chastisements—He invites them to turn from their evil ways and seek His face. I feel moved to say at the commencement of this discourse that if the text has any limited aspect, if it is to be regarded as uttered to any special character among transgressors, it peculiarly belongs to *backsliders*, for the people to whom it was first addressed were the people of God. They had set up idols and so had wandered. And it is to them, chiefly, though not to them exclusively, that these encouragements to repentance are presented.

And probably there are some backsliders here who once stood in the Church of God, but have been cut off from there. Who once were very zealous and earnest in the cause of God, but have now become utterly indifferent to all religion. I charge such to take this text home to themselves. Take every syllable of it into your own heart, Backslider. Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the same—and may the text bring you to your knees and to your God! It gives you a pointed invitation to return from

your wanderings and end your weary backslidings by coming, once more, to your Father's house, for He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the Covenant of Mercy which He has made on your behalf! Happy are you that you may return! Happy shall I be if you return!

I thought I would lay special stress upon this, because the Lord, Himself, and His ministers with Him, rejoice more over one lost sheep that returns to the Shepherd of Souls than over 99 that went not astray! There is rejoicing when a man finds a treasure which he never had before, but it is scarcely equal to the joy of the woman who found the piece of money which was hers, already, but which she had lost. Glad is the house when the babe is born, but deeper is the joy when the lost son is found. My soul longs to see the Lord bring home His banished ones and to be the means of gathering His scattered ones!

Still, the text is fully applicable to all sinners—to all who have corrupted themselves and done evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke Him to anger. The Ever Merciful encourages them to turn to Him with full purpose of heart by assuring them that He will not forsake them. There seems to me to be in the text three points which should induce an earnest seeking of His face at once, for here is, first, *a time mentioned*. Secondly, *a way appointed*. And thirdly, *encouragement given*.

I. First, then, in the text there is A TIME MENTIONED. Look at it—"If from there you shall seek the Lord... When you are in tribulation, and all these things are come upon you, even in the latter days." The time in which the Lord bids you seek Him, O you unforgiven ones, is first of all, "*from there*," that is, from the condition into which you have fallen, or the position which you now occupy. According to the connection of the text, the offending Israelites were supposed to be in captivity, scattered among various nations, dwelling where they were compelled to worship gods of wood and stone, which could not see, nor hear, nor feel, nor eat, nor smell.

Yet "from there"—from the unhallowed heathen villages, from their lone sorrows by the waters of Babylon, from their captivity in far-off Chaldea, they were bid to turn unto the Lord and obey His voice! Their surroundings were not to be allowed to hinder their prayers. Perhaps, dear Friend, at this time you are dwelling among ungodly relatives. If you begin to speak about religion, you are put down at once. You hear nothing that can help you in the way to better things, but very much that would hinder you. Nevertheless, do not delay, but, "*from there*," even from *there*, seek the Lord, for it is written—"If you seek Him, He will be found of you."

It may be you are living in a neighborhood where everything is hostile to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and injurious, even, to your morals. Time was, and you may remember it with regret, when you were a child upon the knee of a pious mother, when you spent your Sundays in the Sunday school, when the Bible was read in your house everyday. But now all these helps are taken from you and everything around is dragging you down to greater and yet greater sin. Do not, however, make this a reason for delay—as well might a man refuse to go to a physician because he lives in an unhealthy locality, or a drowning man refuse a lifeboat because a

raging sea surrounds him! Hasten, rather than slacken your speed! Do not tarry till your position improves—do not wait till you move into a godly family, or live nearer to the means of Grace, for if you seek Him “from there” He will be found of you.

But you will tell me that it is not so much your regret that others are ungodly among whom you dwell, but that you, yourself, are in a wretched condition of heart. You have followed after one sin and another until evil has become a habit with you and you cannot shake it off. Like a rolling thing before the whirlwind, you are driven on—an awful force impels you from bad to worse. Awake yourself, O Man, for immediate action! If you wait till you have conquered this evil force by your *own* strength—if you delay to turn unto God until you are free from the dominion of sin—then assuredly you will wait forever and perish in your folly. If you could vanquish evil by your own power you would not need to seek the Lord, for you would have found salvation in *yourself*, but be not so infatuated as to dream of such a thing!

Today, “from there,” from the place where you now are, turn your face to your Father who is in Heaven and seek Him through Jesus Christ. Remember that hymn which ought to be sung every Sunday in our assemblies—

**“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.”**

Every verse begins with, “Just as I am,” and so must your prayers, your faith, your hope begin. The whole hymn commences, “Just as I am,” and so must your Christian life be started. The Lord invites you *as you are* and *where you are*. Are you one of a godless family, the only one in the house who has felt any serious thought at all? Come, then, and tarry not, for the Lord invites you! Are you the one man in a large workshop where all the rest are irreligious? Admire His Sovereign Grace, accept the call and from now on be the Lord’s! The Lord invites those of you who have gone to the ends of the earth in sin and brought yourselves into captivity by your rebellion. Today, even *today*, He bids you seek Him “with all your heart and with all your soul.”

With regard to the time of turning, it is well worthy of our notice that we are especially encouraged to turn unto the Lord if we are in a painful plight. Our text says, “When you are in tribulation.” Are you sick? Have you felt ill for some time? Does your weakness increase upon you? Are you apprehensive that this sickness may even be unto death? When you are in such tribulation, then you may return to Him. A sick body should lead us the more earnestly to seek healing for our sick soul. Are you poor, have you come down from a comfortable position to one of hard labor and of scant provision? When you are in this tribulation then turn to the Lord, for He has sent you this need to make you see your yet greater necessity, even your need of Himself.

The empty purse should make you remember your soul poverty, the bare cupboard should lead you to see the emptiness of all your carnal confidences and accumulating debts should compel you to calculate how

much you owe to your Lord. It is possible that your trials are very bitter at this moment because you are expecting to lose someone whom you dearly love and this is like tearing half of yourself away. One dear child is hardly cold in the tomb and your heart is bleeding when you think of that loss—and now another is sickening and will follow the first. When you are in this tribulation, then be sure to seek the Lord, for His pitying heart is open to you and He will sanctify this grief to noblest purposes.

Is it possible that I speak to one whose sins have become so open as to have been punished by the law of the land? Have you lost your character? Will none employ you any longer? When you are in this tribulation, then turn to your Lord, for He will receive earth's castaways and make criminals His sons! Have you suffered from the just verdict of society because you are vicious, dishonest and disreputable? Are you, at this time, despised and looked down upon? Yet even to you would I say, when you are in tribulation, when every door is shut, when all hands are held up against you—even then seek the Lord and He will be found of you! If your father scarcely dares to think upon your name. If you have been a grief to your sister's heart and have brought your mother's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, yet now, even in this shameful estate when you are in tribulation, turn to the Lord your God!

Doubtless there are some people who will never be saved unless they come into tribulation. Their substance must all be spent and a mighty famine must come upon them. The citizens of the far country must refuse them aid and with hungry bellies they must stand at the trough and be willing to feed with the swine, or else it will never occur to them to say, "I will arise and go to my Father." No matter how deep your trouble, your safest and wisest course is to flee to God in Christ Jesus and put your trust in Him! Notice further, when you feel that the judgments of God have begun to overtake you, then you may come to Him. "When you are in tribulation and all these things—these threatened things—are come upon you."

There are many in this world who feel as if their sin had at last found them out and had commenced to be a Hell to them. The Manslayer has overtaken them and is striking at them with terrible blows. "Ah," says one, "my great sins have provoked, at last, God, and all men may see what He has done to me, for He has removed my choicest mercies from me. I despised a father's instruction—that father is dead. I did not value my mother's tears—my mother sleeps under the sod. The dear wife who used to beg me to walk to the House of God with her—I slighted and treated her with unkindness—and death has removed her from my bosom. The little child that used to climb my knee and sing its little hymns and persuade me to pray, has gone, too. God has found me out, at last, and begun to strip me. These are only the first drops of an awful shower of wrath from which I cannot escape.

"Alas, while one mercy after another is removed, my former joys have been embittered and are joys no more. I go to the theater as I used to do, but I do not enjoy it. I see beneath the paint and the gilt and it seems a mockery of my woe. My old companions come to see me and they would

sing me the old songs, but I cannot bear them. Their mirth grates on my ears—at times it seems to be mere idiotic yelling. I used to get alone and philosophize and dote upon many things which afforded me comfort, but now I find no consolation in them—I have no joy of my thoughts now. The world is dreary and my soul is weary. I am in the sere and yellow leaf and all the world is fading with me. What little joy I had before has utterly departed and no new joy comes. I am neither fit for God nor fit for the devil. I can find no peace in sin and no rest in religion. Into the narrow way I fear I cannot enter and in the broad way I am so jostled that I do not know how to pursue my course.

“Worst of all, there is before me a dreadful outlook. I am filled with horrible apprehensions of the dread hereafter. I am afraid of the harvest which must follow the sad seed sowing of my misspent life. I have a dread of death upon me. I know not how near it may be, but it is too near, I know, and I am not prepared for it. I am overwhelmed with thoughts of the judgment to come. I hear the trumpet ringing in my ears when I am at work. I hear the messengers of God’s justice summoning me and saying, ‘Come to judgment, come to judgment, come away.’ A fearful sound is in my ears and I—where shall I go?” Hear, O Man, and be comforted, for *now* is the appointed time for you to seek the Lord, for our text says, “When all these things are come upon you, if you turn unto the Lord your God, He will not forsake you neither destroy you.”

There is yet one more word which appears to me to contain great comfort in it and it is this, “even in the latter days.” This expression may refer to the latter days of Jewish history, though I can scarcely think it does, because the Jews are not, now, guilty of idolatry. I rather think it must refer to the latter days of any one of their captivities and in *our* case to the latter days of life. Looking around me I see that many of you are advanced in years and if you are unconverted I thank God I am as free to preach Christ to you as if you had been children or young men! If you have spent 60 or 70 years in rebellion against your God, you may return, “even in the latter days.” If your day is almost over and you have arrived at the 11th hour, when the sun touches the horizon and evening shadows thicken, still He may call you into His vineyard and at the close of the day give you your penny! He is long-suffering and full of mercy, not willing that any should perish! And therefore He sends me out as His messenger to assure you that if you seek Him, He will be found of you, “even in the latter days.”

It is a beautiful sight, though it is mingled with much sadness, to see a very old man become a babe in Christ. It is sweet to see him, after he has been so many years the proud, wayward, self-confident master of himself, at last learning wisdom and sitting at Jesus’ feet. They hang up in the cathedrals and public halls old banners which have long been carried by the enemy into the thick of the fight. If they have been torn by shot and shell, so much the more do the captors value them—the older the standard the more honor is it, it seems, to seize it as a trophy. Men boast when they have carried off—

“The flag that braved a thousand years

The battle and the breeze.

Oh, how I wish that my Lord and Master would lay hold on some of you worn-out sinners, you who have been set up by the devil as standards of sin! O that the Prince of the kings of the earth would compel you to say, "Love conquers even me."

I will not leave this head till I have said that it gives me great joy to be allowed to preach an *immediate* Gospel to you—a Gospel which bids you turn unto God and find *present* salvation! Suppose, for a moment, that the Gospel ran thus—"You, Sinner, shall be saved in 12 months time if you turn to God." Oh, Sirs, I should count the days for you till the 12 months were gone. If it were written, "I will be found of you in March, 1877," I should weary over you till the auspicious season arrived and say, "Maybe they will die before mercy's hour has struck! Spare them, good Lord!" Yes, and if it were true that God would not hear you until next Lord's-Day I should like to lock you up and keep you out of harm's way, if I could, till that time arrived, lest you should die before the promised hour.

If there were any way of insuring your lives, though you had to give all that you have for your soul, you might be glad to insure your life till next Lord's-Day. But, blessed be God, the promise does not tarry! It is NOW! "*Today* if you will hear His voice." The Gospel does not even bid you wait till you reach your home, or get to your bedside—but here and now—in that pew and at this moment, if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul, the Lord Jesus will be found of you and present salvation shall be immediately enjoyed! Is it not encouraging to think that just now the Lord is waiting to be gracious?

II. But now, secondly, let us look at THE WAY APPOINTED. To find mercy, what are we bid to do? "If from there you shall seek the Lord your God." We have not, then, to *bring* anything to God, but to *seek* Him. We have not to seek a righteousness to bring to Him, nor seek a state of heart which will fit us for Him, but to seek *Him* at once! Sinner, you have offended God. None but God can forgive you, for the offenses are against Himself. Seek Him, then, that He may forgive you. It is essential that you seek Him as a real existence and a true Person, believing that He is and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

It is all in vain to seek sacraments—you must seek Him. It is idle to go through forms of prayer, or to utter customary phrases of devotion—you must seek Him. Your salvation lies in God, Sinner, and your seeking must be after God. Do you understand this? It is not going to your priest or to your clergyman, or to your Bible or to your Prayer Book, or even to your knees in formal prayer—you must draw near to God in Christ Jesus—and *He* must be found of you as a man finds a treasure and takes it to be his own. "But where shall I find Him?" one asks. When they sought God of old they went to the Mercy Seat, for there the Lord had promised to speak with them. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ is that Mercy Seat, sprinkled with precious blood—and if you want to find God, you must seek Him in the Person of Jesus Christ!

Is it not written, “No man comes unto the Father but by Me”? Jesus is the *one* Mediator between God and man—and if you would find God, you must find Him in the Person of Jesus the Nazarene—who is also the Son of the Highest. You will find Jesus by believing Him, trusting Him, resting upon Him. When you have trusted Jesus, you have found God in Jesus, for He has said, “He that has seen Me, has seen the Father.” Then have you come to God when you have believed in Jesus Christ. How simple this is! How unencumbered with subtleties and difficulties! When God gives Grace, how easy and how plain is believing! Salvation is not by *doing*, nor by *being*, nor by *feeling*, but simply by *believing*. We are not to be content with self, but to seek the Lord! Being nothing in ourselves, we are to go out of ourselves to Him. Being, ourselves, unworthy, we are to find worthiness in Jesus!

We are also to grasp the Lord as ours, for the text says, “You shall seek the Lord *your God*.” Sinners, that is a part of saving faith, to take God to be *your God*. If He is only another man’s God, He cannot save you. He must be yours, yours, assuredly yours, yours to trust and love and serve all your days, or you will be lost. Now, mark God’s directions—“If you seek Him *with all your heart and with all your soul*.” There must be no pretence about this seeking. If you desire to be saved, there must be no playing and toying, trifling and feigning. The search must be real, sincere, earnest, fervent, intense and thorough-going or it will be a failure.

Is this too much to ask? Surely if anything in the world deserves earnestness it is this! If anything ought to awake all a man’s powers to energy, it is the salvation of his soul! You cannot win gold and attain riches without being in earnest in the pursuit—and what earnestness does *this* deserve? This obtaining eternal life, deliverance from eternal death, acceptance in the Beloved, endless bliss? Oh, men, women, if you sleep over anything, at any rate be awake here! If you trifle upon any matters of importance, yet here, at any rate, be serious, solemn and earnest. Here there must be no idling and no delay. Note that there is a repetition in the text. “If you seek Him *with all your heart and with all your soul*”—we must be *doubly* in earnest—heart and soul must be in the pursuit.

Half-hearted seeking is no seeking at all. To ask for mercy from God and at the same time to be willing to be without it is a mere pretence of asking. If you are content to be put off with an inferior blessing, you are not seeking the Lord at all. I remember one who is now a member of this Church who, in a desperate fit of soul anxiety, said solemnly to one of us, “I will never go to work again. I will neither eat nor drink till I have found the Savior.” And with that solemn resolve it was not long before he had found Him! Oh, Sirs, suppose you should be lost? Suppose you should perish while I am speaking? I know of no reason why your pulse should continue to beat, or your breath should remain in your nostrils—and if at this moment you were to die—at that same instant you would plunge amidst the flames of Hell! Escape, then, at once!

Even now make soul matters your sole concern. Whatever else you have to attend to, leave it alone and attend, first, to this chief thing, the salvation of your soul! If a man were in a sinking vessel, he may have

been a student of the classics, but he will not think of his stopping to translate an ode of Horace! He may have been a mathematician, but he will not sit down to work out an equation—he will leap, at once, from the sinking vessel into the lifeboat, for his objective will be to save his life. And should it not be so as to our *eternal life*? My soul, my soul, this must be saved and with all my heart will I seek God in Jesus Christ that I may find salvation.

The text further adds that we are to *turn* to Him. Did you notice the 30th verse—“*If you turn to the Lord your God.*” It must be a thorough turn. You are looking now towards the world—you must turn in the opposite direction and look God-ward. It must not be an apparent turn, but a *real* change of the nature, a turning of the entire soul—a turning with repentance for the past, with confidence in Christ for the present and with holy desires for the future. Heart, soul, life, speech, action—all must be changed. Unless you are converted you cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven. May God grant you such a turn as this and to this end pray, “Turn me and I shall be turned.”

Then it is added, “*and be obedient to His voice,*” for we cannot be saved in disobedience. Christ has not come to save His people *in* their sins, but *from* their sins. “If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land. But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword.” Do you see, my dear unconverted Hearers, what God’s advice is to you? It is that you obey, now, His Gospel and bow before the scepter of His Son Jesus. He would have you admit that you have erred and entreat to be kept from erring again. Your proud self-will must yield and your self-confidence must be renounced. You must incline your ear and come unto Him, “Hear and your soul shall live.”

This His Holy Spirit will grant you Grace to do! This is the least that could be asked of you. You could not expect the great King to pardon rebels and allow them to continue in rebellion! He could not allow you to continue in sin and yet partake of His Grace. You know that such a course would not be worthy of a holy God. Do you feel inclined, at this moment, to turn to the Lord? Does some gentle power you have never felt before, draw you beyond yourself? Do you perceive that it would be well for you to be reconciled to your God and Father? Do you feel some inkling of regret, some spark of good desire? Then yield to the impulse! I trust it is the Holy Spirit within, working in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure. Yield at once—completely yield and He will lead you by a way you know not and bring you to Jesus, and in Him you shall find peace, rest, holiness, happiness and Heaven!

Let this be the happy day. Bend before the Spirit’s breath as the reed bows in the wind. Quench not the Spirit, grieve Him no more—

***“Lest slighted once, the season fair
Should never return again.”***

Beware lest bleeding love should never woo again, lest pitying Grace should never more entreat and tender mercy should never more cast its cords around you. The spouse said, “Draw me, we will run after You”—say

the same. Behold, before you is an open door and within that door a waiting Savior! Will you perish on the threshold?

III. Thirdly, the text contains VERY RICH ENCOURAGEMENTS. How does it run? “For the Lord your God is a merciful God; *He will not forsake you.*” Look at that, Sinner! “He will not forsake you.” If He were to say, “Let him alone, Ephraim is given unto idols,” it would be all over with you. But if you seek Him, He will not say, “Let him alone,” nor take His Holy Spirit from you. You are not yet given up, I hope, or you would not have been here this morning to hear this sermon.

I thought, when I woke this morning and saw the snow and pitiless sleet driven by a vehement wind, that it was a pity I had studied such a subject, for I would like to have the house crowded with sinners and they are not so likely to come out in bad weather. Just then I remembered that it was upon just such a morning as this that I found the Savior, myself, and that thought gave me much courage in coming here. I thought the congregation cannot be smaller than that of which I was one on that happy day when I looked to Christ. I believe that many will, this morning, be brought out and saved, for the Lord has not forsaken this congregation! I used to think He had given me up and would not show me mercy after so long seeking in vain. But He had not forsaken me, nor has He cast *you* off, O Sinner! If you seek Him with all your heart and soul, you may rest assured He will not forsake you.

And then it is added, “*Neither destroy you.*” You have been afraid He would. You have often thought the earth would open and swallow you. You have been afraid to fall asleep lest you should never wake again, but the Lord will not destroy you. No, rather He will reveal His saving power in you. There is a sweeter word, still, in the 29th verse—“*You shall find Him if you seek Him.*” I wish I could sing and could extemporize a bit of music, for then I would stand here and sing those words—“You shall find Him if you seek Him.” At any rate, the words have sweet melody in them to my ears and heart—“You shall find Him if you seek Him.” I should like to whisper that sentence softly to the sick and to shout it to the busy. It ought to linger long in your memories and abide in your hearts—“You shall find Him if you seek Him.” What more, poor Sinner, what more do you need?

Then there are two reasons given—“*For the Lord your god is a merciful God.*” Oh, guilty Soul, the Lord does not want to damn you! He does not desire to destroy you! Judgment is His strange work. Have you ever had to chasten your child? When you have felt bound to punish him severely by reason of a great fault, has it not been very hard work? You have said to yourself a hundred times over, “What shall I do? What shall I do to escape from the misery of causing pain to my dear child?” You have been driven to chasten him or you would not have done it. God never sends a sinner to Hell till justice demands it. He finds no joy in punishing. He swears, “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies.”

Look at the judge when he puts on the black cap, does he do so with pleasure? No, some of our judges speak with choked utterance and with many tears when they say to the prisoner, “You must be taken to the

place from where you came, there to be hanged by the neck till you are dead." God never puts on the black cap without His heart yearning for men! His mercy endures forever and He delights in it. Notice how the Lord teaches us His care even over the most guilty by the comparisons He makes. "What man of you," says He, "having a sheep gone astray, will not go after it until he finds it? What man of you, having a sheep that is fallen into a ditch, will not pull it out?" Any animal which belongs to us causes us concern if we lose it, or if it is in trouble. I noticed the other night how even the little kitten could not be missing without causing anxiety to the household. What calling and searching!

Rougher natures might say, "If the kitten will stay out of doors all night, let it do so." But the owner thought not so, for the night was cold and wet. I have seen great trouble when a bird has been lost through the opening of a cage door and many a vain struggle to catch it again. What a stir there is in the house about a little short-lived bird! We do not like to lose a bird, or a kitten—and do you think the good God will willingly lose those whom He has made in His own image and who are to exist forever? I have used a very simple and homely illustration, but it commends itself to the heart. You know what you would do to regain a lost bird, but what will *not* God do to save a soul? An immortal spirit is better than 10,000 birds!

Does God care for souls? Yes, that He does, and in proof thereof Jesus has come to seek and to save the lost. The Shepherd cannot rest while one of His flock is in danger. "It is only one sheep! You have 99 more, good man, why do you go and bother yourself about one?" He cannot be pacified. He is considering where that sheep may be. He imagines all sorts of perils and distresses. Perhaps it is lying on its back and cannot turn over, or it has fallen into a pit, or is entangled among briars, or the wolf is ready to seize it. It is not merely its intrinsic value to him, but he is concerned for it because it is *his* sheep, and the object of his care. Oh, Soul, God has such a care for man! He waits to be gracious and His Spirit goes forth towards sinners—therefore return to Him!

Now dwell upon that last argument—"He will not forget the Covenant of your fathers." The Covenant always keeps open the path between God and man. The Lord has made a Covenant concerning poor sinners with His Son Jesus Christ. He has laid help upon One that is mighty and given *Him* for a Covenant to the people. He always remembers Jesus and how He kept that Covenant. He calls to mind His sighs, tears, groans and death-throes—and He fulfills His promise for the great Sufferer's sake. God's Grace has kept His Covenant on behalf of men! God is even eager to forgive that He may reward Christ and give Him to see of the travail of His soul!

Now, listen to me, you who are still unconverted. What solid ground there is, here, for your hope! If the Lord were to deal with you according to the Covenant of *Works*, what could He do but destroy you? But here is a Covenant of Grace made in Jesus Christ on the behalf of sinners and all that believe in Jesus are partakers in that Covenant and are made partakers of the countless blessings which that Covenant secures. Believe in Jesus! Cast yourself upon Him and by the Covenant mercies of God you

shall assuredly be saved! You have heard me preach like this before, have you not, a good many times? Yes, and I am, sometimes, fearful lest God's people should grow tired of this kind of sermon. But then you need it over and over again.

How many more times will some of you need to be told this? How many more times must the great mercy of God be set before you? Are we to keep on inviting you, again and again and again, and go back with no favorable answer from you? I have been questioning myself in the night watches about this and I have said, "These people are unconverted. Is it my fault? Do I fail in telling them my Lord's message? Do I mar the Gospel? Well," I thought, "if it is so, yet I will charge them not to be partakers of my *fault*." Brothers and Sisters, God's mercy is so rich that even when the story of it is badly told, it ought to influence your hearts! It is so grand a thing that God should be in Christ reconciling the world to Himself by a wondrous Sacrifice, that if I stuttered and stammered, you ought to be glad to hear it! Or even if I told you in terms that were obscure, you ought to be so eager to know it that you would search out my meaning!

In secret correspondence a cipher is often used, but inquisitive people soon discover it. Ought there not to be more interest taken in the Gospel? But, my Friends, I do not speak obscurely. I am as plain a speaker as one might meet in a day's march and with all my heart I set Christ before you and bid you trust Him! Will you do so this morning? Or will you not? See how dark it is outside, even at noon? God has hung the very heavens in mourning. Never fear, the sun will soon break forth and light up the day and even so—

***"Our hearts, if God we seek to know
Shall know Him and rejoice!
His coming like the morn shall be,
As morning songs His voice.
So shall His Presence bless our souls,
And shed a joyful light;
That hallowed morn shall chase away
The sorrows of the night."***

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Deuteronomy 4.
HYMN FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—199, 555, 40.**

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BROUGHT OUT TO BE BROUGHT IN NO. 2511

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 4, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 6, 1886.**

***“He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He swore unto our fathers.”
Deuteronomy 6:23.***

OUR text occurs in the passage where the Israelites are told to personally instruct their children concerning the testimonies and statutes and judgments of the Lord. When they asked the meaning of the various ordinances of God's House, their *parents were to tell them—not to refer them to the priest*—they were, themselves, to instruct their children in the things of God. In our own case, however much we may love and appreciate the Sunday school system—and we cannot love it too much—I hope we shall never forget that the first duty towards the child belongs to the parent. Fathers and mothers are the most natural agents for God to use in the salvation of their children. I am sure that, in my early youth, no teaching ever had such an impression upon my mind as the instruction of my mother—neither can I conceive that to any child there can be one who will have such influence over the young heart as the mother who has so tenderly cared for her offspring.

We should especially tell our children our own experience, for so it is enjoined in this passage—“When your son asks you in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God has commanded you? Then you shall say unto your son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.” Perhaps, my Friend, there is no testimony that you can bear which will be so useful, so interesting and so striking, as the testimony of what you have, yourself, seen and handled of the Word of Life. Tell the Gospel as you find it in the Bible, but set it in the frame of your own experience of its preciousness! Tell your son how you sinned and how the Lord had mercy upon you. Tell him how He met with you, how you were brought to seek His face, how you were born again, how you received a new heart and a right spirit. He will think the more of this great change because it happened to his father, or to his mother, or to some kind friend. And, perhaps, if he is not himself converted as a child, in his later life he may think of what you told him or the remembrance of his mother's God may rise before him when he is far away from the scenes of his youth and has spent many years in foolish vanities—and he may even then turn to God, beckoned back to the great Father's House above by the memory of his godly father and mother here below.

It is my earnest desire, just now, to bear witness on the behalf of many of God's people while I try to explain the meaning of our text, "He brought us out. . . that He might bring us in." We shall have three heads to our discourse. First, *we were brought out*. As surely as Israel was brought out of Egypt, we who believe in Jesus have been brought out of the house of our bondage! Therefore, secondly, *we are out*. And thirdly, the Lord who brought us out *will bring us into another and a better country*—into "Your land, O Immanuel"—into that place of rest and everlasting jubilee which God by Covenant has given over to His people as their perpetual possession.

I. First, dear Friends, let us speak upon the fact that we were BROUGHT OUT. Our text says, "He brought us out from there." That is, Jehovah, the God of Israel, brought His people out from the house of bondage and, in like manner, we bear our testimony that the Lord has delivered us from the bondage of sin and Satan.

Our witness, therefore, is, first of all, that *God has had to do with us*. Some there are who think that God dwells far away, shut up in eternal seclusion. But we have not found it so, for He has had dealings in mercy with us. They suppose that the things here below are too little and too commonplace for God to consider, but it has not been so with us, for He has dealt well with His servants according to His Word. They suppose that there is a thick veil that shuts us out from the Invisible, a great gulf that parts us poor mortals from any communication with God. They smile and turn upon their heels when we begin to talk of God—they are "agnostics"—know-nothings. Perhaps they will not say that there is no God, but they *do* say that they do not know whether there is a God or not! And, as to any communication between the Holy One of Israel and such poor creatures as we are, they will not believe it to be possible. Well, then, we have to bear our testimony upon this point and it is this—that with some of us a very little while ago, and with others of us so many years ago as to be among the memories of our youth—God had solemn dealings. We were in the land of darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death. We were fond of sin—we were slaves to it and we had no wish nor will to escape from it—but He who is the Father of our spirits, having loved us with an everlasting love, and having made a Covenant with His only-begotten Son on our behalf, tore the heavens and in majesty came down!

This was done *spiritually*, for God is a Spirit and, therefore, they who were round about us knew it not. And we ourselves saw Him not and beheld no similitude—neither heard we any voice with our outward ear. But, though it was spiritual, God's coming to us was very real, for spirit is as real as matter and God is as real as the things that we touch, or see, or feel. We are not deceived in this matter, or, if we are, it has become so much a matter of daily consciousness, as well as of past memory, that we must be, indeed, besotted beyond all conception! But it has not been a dream to us, for it has changed our whole lives and it does, today, affect and move us most powerfully. We can imagine that it is a dream that we eat and drink, but it is no dream that God lives in us and we live in Him! It may be a dream that we have grown up from childhood into manhood—though it would take a great deal of argument to prove

that to us—but it is no dream that, whereas we were blind, now we see! It is no dream that, whereas we were dead, now we live! It is no dream that things we did not believe in are now to us the best and highest and most practical of facts! It is not a dream that God has dealt with us and, though we cannot expect men to believe us, we feel sure that, had they known what we know, they would have been as little doubtful about it as we are. Had they passed through the experience we have had, they would have been as dogmatic in their assertion about it as we take leave to be.

Though we may be thought fools for this confidence, we think we are not fools. In other matters we are at least the equals of the men who think us fools as to our religion—and we can reason as well as they. If they have understanding, we have understanding, also. And, at any rate, we are quite willing to leave the matter to the test of the next world. You see, Beloved, we have two strings to our bow—if we should turn out to have been wrong and should die like dogs, we shall be none the worse—whereas, if our beliefs turn out to be well-founded, the ungodly will be in a sorry case, indeed! So we bear our witness without any kind of fear or shame, or any alarm about being thought fools for it, and we say that God has dealt with our spirits. Our spirit has spoken to His Spirit, and His Spirit has spoken to our spirit, and there have been Divine communications to us from the great God who made us, who, we assert, has new-made us and brought us out of our former condition into another and a better state. So, with the Israelites, we can say, “He brought us out.”

In describing this bringing out, I have to remind you that the Christian’s life runs parallel with the life of Israel in Egypt.

In order to get Israel out of Egypt, the first thing was *to make Israel loathe Egypt*. When Israel was in Goshen and the land brought forth plentifully, Israel was like sheep in clover and, like a bullock that loves deep pasture, had no desire to come out from the fat Delta of the Nile. Israel prospered, Israel was great. Was not Joseph at the head of the State? And even after his death, did not the memory of Joseph still make every Egyptian respect the Israelites? They would have lived there, still—there would have been no coming out of Egypt, for Israel, if all had gone well with them there. The Lord saw that the first thing to be done, in preparation for the people’s emancipation, was to make them loathe Egypt. So there arises a new king that knows not Joseph, a king who considers that the existence of a foreign people in the midst of his nation is a source of danger. He must begin, if possible, to reduce their numbers. They shall work for him and render the unpaid labor of slaves. When they do this and still multiply, they shall find their own straw with which to make the bricks. When they complain of this, they shall have the tale of the bricks doubled until they begin to sigh and cry and groan by reason of their taskmasters.

If you had met an Israelite ten years before the period of slavery and had said to him, “Do you feel at home in Egypt?” he would have answered, “Certainly! Everything prospers with us—we cannot do better than be here.” But afterwards, if you had met him and put to him the same question, he would have said, “Wish to stay in Egypt? Not I! Would God I could escape from the taskmaster! It is cruelty from morning to

night and a toil that is terrible. And I have heard”—and the strong man would stand and weep as he told the story—“I have heard that now there is an edict issued that our male children shall be cast into the river, so that, if we have a son born into our house, it will be, indeed, an unbearable sorrow, for our children must be destroyed by the tyrant.” It was a great step towards the accomplishment of God’s eternal purpose when He made Israel to feel that Egypt was a house of bondage.

It is in some such way as this that God makes His own elect to feel that the state of nature—the worldly, natural, sinful state—is a state of bondage. Look at the multitude of our fellow men—they have no wish to enter into any other state, they are quite satisfied with the condition in which they now are. Provided that they can earn good wages, that they can make money, that they can enjoy themselves in the pleasures of this life, they do not want anything more. You seem to be as those that mock when you talk to them about another world—they have enough difficulty to make both ends meet in this world, they say! You speak about a judgment to come—they would be a deal more impressed with some information about the police courts than about the Last Dread Assize when the Judge of All shall sit upon the Great White Throne! No, if they do not believe themselves to be mere beasts, to live and die, and then that will be an end of them, yet they *act as if that were their belief*. It is so with the most of our fellow men and it was so with you and with me in our unregenerate state. If we could have had our choice, we would have had a good time of it here, perhaps taking as our motto, “A short life and a merry one.” Or, if we were more prudent, we would have wished to have a well-ordered, moral, upright life in which we could be respectable and respected, and that would have satisfied us. O Sirs, it is a miracle of Grace that God has made us to loathe that old land of Egypt and to count it to be a house of bondage! And now, to live unto ourselves is slavery! To live for this world seems to us to be the meanest and most beggarly thing that can be!

That was the first thing, then, that God did towards bringing out His people—He made them to loathe Egypt.

The next thing He did was, *to make them see His wrath upon Egypt*—the plagues that He sent. They had, no doubt, looked upon the Egyptians as being a very happy people, like themselves. They were, for a time, birds of a feather. But now they see all Egypt made the target for Jehovah’s thunderbolts! At one time, all is darkness. At another time, the very air is filled with lice and flies. One day the frogs come up everywhere, even into the king’s chambers. At another hour, boils and sores are on man and beast and, at the appointed period, there comes a shower of fire and the fire is mingled with hail! And the fire runs along the ground and terrific claps of thunder come, peal upon peal, one after the other, and Israel thinks, “This is a poor country to live in. We must rise up and be gone! If God deals thus with the Egyptians, God grant that we may not be Egyptians! Let us clear out of this land as soon as we can.”

So has God made some of us see His judgments upon guilty men. We have walked through the world with our eyes open and we have seen men as others do not see them—with the leprosy of sin white upon their brow! We have seen them with the fever of lust which nothing could

abate. We have seen them droop and die and, with our eyes open, we have seen them pass into that region which is divided forever from all hope by a great gulf, so that they that would pass from us to them cannot, neither can they come to us that would pass from there! Yes, and our spirits have listened till we have heard in dread and fear the weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth of souls that passed away unforgiven, without God and without hope! We have heard that this city is to be burned up, for it is the City of Destruction and, burdened as we were, we began to run from it that we might, perhaps, escape before God should pour out the full vials of His vengeance upon men. I am talking no dreams now, or, at any rate, they are such dreams as I have had when I am most awake—such dreams as some here present have had, and such dreams as have made us anxious to get away from this present evil world which lies in the Wicked One, that we may not be destroyed with it in the day of God's righteous wrath!

Furthermore, dear Friends, God brought His people out of Egypt *by breaking the power which held them in bondage*. When they wished to get away from Pharaoh, they could not, for he held them as his slaves. But in due time God began to deal with Pharaoh and, at last, when He had killed the first-born in all the land, and the chief of all the strength of Egypt, they could not hold in captivity a single Israelite, no, not even a cow or a sheep or a goat that belonged to Israel! The power of Egypt was so completely broken that not a hoof was left behind!

And there came a day with us when the power of sin was finally broken. We sat at the foot of the Cross looking up weeping and wondering, and all of a sudden, as we believed in Jesus, we learned the meaning of the angel's message to Joseph, "You shall call His name, JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins." And then and there He saved us from our sins! The guilt of sin was gone but, what was stranger, still, *the power of sin was gone, too*. We had proven the truth of the Apostle's words, "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the Law, but under Grace." With the crimson blood that bought our pardon, there fell the white and sparkling drops that cleansed our nature! The water with the blood delivered us from the guilt and power of sin and we were free, strangely free! We wondered how it was that we had not the desires and passions and inclinations that we used to have, or, if they came, we had a new life and power with which we fought with them hand to hand. We welcomed them no more as friends, but we spurned them as our worst foes, for God had delivered us from the great bondage we were under! Sin is a thing abhorred and detested by us and our spirit has come clean out from under its power as a reigning force!

Remember also, Beloved, that when the Lord broke the power of Egypt over Israel, *it was on the night of the Passover that He did it*. That was the final blow that fell when the Israelites had slain the paschal lamb and sprinkled its blood upon the lintel and the two side posts of their houses. When Jehovah saw the blood, then He passed over them in such a wondrous way that they, also, passed over the Egyptians and marched out of the land more than conquerors through Him that had bled for them under the emblem of the paschal lamb!

Beloved, that redemption has been accomplished for us, also! It is not everyone who can remember the very day and hour of his deliverance, but, as I told you the other morning, of Richard Knill, who said, "At such a time of the day, clang went every harp in Heaven, for Richard Knill was born again," it was even so with me! I looked to Jesus and as I looked, I lived, and then and there I came clean out from that old slavery in which I had dwelt up to that hour! Blessed be the name of God for that glorious emancipation!

Yet once more upon this part of our text, "He brought us out" when, after being set free, *we were violently pursued by our old sins*. The Israelites went up harnessed, marching in their ranks and, I doubt not, singing as they went because they were delivered from the daily task and from the cruel bondage. But suddenly they turned their heads while they were marching, for they heard a dreadful noise behind them, a noise of chariots and of men shouting for battle! And, at last, when they could really see the Egyptians and the thick cloud of dust rising behind them, then they feared that they would be destroyed, they should now fall by the hand of the enemy. You remember, Beloved, after your conversion (it may not have happened to you all, but it did to me), there came a time when the enemy said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil! My lust shall be satisfied upon them! I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." So Satan, loath to leave a soul, pursues it quickly. He will have it back if he can. And often, soon after conversion, there comes a time of dreadful conflict—when the soul seems as if it could not live. "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that the Lord brought us into this condition of temporary freedom, that we might be all the more distressed by our adversaries?" So said Unbelief!

But you recollect how God brought His people right out by one final stroke. Miriam knew it when she took her timbrel and went forth with the women, and answered them in the jubilant song, "Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea!" I love best of all that note in the song of Moses where he says, "The depths have covered them." "There remained not so much as one of them." What gladness must have been in the hearts of the children of Israel when they knew that their enemies were all gone! I am sure it was so with me, for after my conversion, being again attacked by sin, I saw the mighty stream of redeeming love roll over all my sins and this was my song, "The depths have covered them!" "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!"

II. There has been so much in the first part of our subject—"He brought us out"—that I must speak only very briefly upon our second division which is, WE ARE OUT.

That is to say, dear Friends, we are out of the bondage of sin and death, *never to be captured again, and never to go back again of our own free will*. "Oh," says one, "that is strong teaching." I do not care whether it is strong or weak, it is *Bible* teaching! Our Lord Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto

them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” To the woman at the well our Savior said, “Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: but 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.” The work of the Holy Spirit is no temporary regeneration, but one that really makes the man new forever—and the devil, himself, cannot undo the work! No, dear Friend, if God brings you up out of Egypt, you shall never go back again into the house of bondage!

I heard, the other day, of a woman who came, at the end of a certain revival meeting, to make a confession of her faith. She said she had been regenerated six times! Now, I have heard and read in the Bible of people being born again, but to be born again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again is *not* what I have read *anywhere* in the Scriptures, or, if such a thing is possible—if being born again does not finally save men, remember that awful warning of the Apostle, “It is impossible. . . if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.” The Word of God is very explicit about that matter. “For the earth which drinks in the rain that comes often upon it, and brings forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God: but that which bears thorns and briers is rejected, and is near unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.”

Our Savior also said, “Salt is good: but if the salt has lost its savor, with what shall *it* be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out.” You cannot imagine that a person can be regenerated twice! If the work of regeneration is accomplished once, and it does not save the soul, then there is no salvation for it! That is all God ever will do and, therefore, do I bless and glorify His name that there never was and never shall be an instance in which He has made a man a new creature in Christ Jesus—and then the work of Grace has failed! There are plenty who come near to this point and who seem, sometimes, to have really reached it—but rest assured of this, Beloved, if the Lord *has* brought you forth out of this captivity, none shall ever undo what God has done! We are out. *We are out.* “He that believes and is baptized *shall be saved.*” We hold to that plain and blessed Truth of God! Of old, the Lord said, “I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” Nothing can be more definite and explicit than that. We are bound for the land of Canaan, and into Canaan we shall go!

We are out. That is, *we are now separated unto the Lord.* If we are, indeed, what I have described, we do not belong, in the fullest sense, to any country or to any people, but we belong to God—we are separate from all people upon the face of the earth! You cannot make anything but a Jew of a Jew. You may do what you like with him, but he always remains a Jew. And you cannot make anything of a Christian but a Christian. Put him where you may, he is still a Christian. Whatever sphere of social life he occupies, or in whatever country he dwells, he is always a Christian. I was never ashamed of being an Englishman except when I have seen an Englishman behaving wrongly towards other people. Then I have felt as if I would be a Frenchman, or anything else! But I would be a Christian, first of all, and above all! When I am a Christian, I know no

nationality. We are cosmopolites—inhabitants of every place, wherever we may be—if we are inhabitants of the holy city which is above. Our citizenship is in Heaven. Therefore we are separated from all the rest of mankind. The world knows us not because it knew not our Lord. May God separate us more and more unto Himself!

But we are separated that we may be *preserved by the Lord and blessed by the Lord*, for Israel, when brought out of Egypt, had to live by manna that dropped daily from Heaven, and by water that gushed out of the Rock. That is how all Christians ought to live. You are not to depend, now, upon the world—you are to depend upon God for everything—for your bread and for your water, and for all your needs. The whole of your life is to be in Him—not only that which is spiritual, but even that which is outward and visible is still to be a life in Christ, and a life for Christ—for you are dead to the world and your life is hid with Christ in God. The Lord said, even by the mouth of Balaam, “The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.” Oh, what a mercy it is to be out of Egypt in that respect!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, whatever our condition may be, here, we are out of *Egypt en route for the Glory land*. He who brought us out of Egypt will bring us into Canaan. Our home is not here. Our feet are not fixed upon this narrow plot of earth—they are moving towards another country, that is, a heavenly one.

III. I can only just touch upon the last part of our text—HE WILL BRING US—for our time has gone. But I want to say this much about it.

The Lord brought us out *on purpose that He might bring us in*. He did not bring us out merely for what we are now, but also for what we are yet to be. If Israel had only been what she ought to have been, she would have been into Canaan almost as soon as she was out of Egypt! And if you and I were all we ought to be, we would, even here, enjoy full happiness, for there is a Heaven below, and there is a rest for the people of God which we find in Christ even now.

So, next, *the delay is caused by our unfitness*. The Israelites were unbelieving, so they had to wander for 40 years in the wilderness before the nation entered upon its heritage in the land of Canaan. And it is because you and I are so carnal and there is so much of unbelief about us, that we go up and down, backwards and forwards, and do not fully enter into the possession of the glorious privileges which are ours by Covenant right. Yet, even here, we who have believed enter into rest! We have a foretaste of Heaven, we have the first-fruits of the Spirit. We have tasted the grapes of Eshcol and we are longing to cross the Jordan and to be—

**“Where our dear Lord His vineyard keeps,
And all the clusters grow.”**

The Lord brought us out with this design, that He might bring us in. It is clear that He *who brought us out can bring us in*. That which remains to be done is not as much as that which has already been done. There is not half as much difficulty between here and Heaven as there lies *behind* us—between here and our fallen condition. Atonement has been made and that is the greatest work of all! Sin has been put away, eternal life has come into these dead souls and merely to keep that flame alive, albeit it needs Divine Power, yet is a small thing compared with the putting

of the Light of God within us and the redeeming us from sin, death and Hell!

He brought us out and He will bring us in, *otherwise He would lose all that He has done*. If the Lord does not bring us into Glory, then the precious blood of Christ has been shed in vain and the Holy Spirit has operated upon our hearts in vain. If God does not finish His work upon us and in us, then men and devils will say that He began to build, but He could not finish. A soul in whom the Lord does not finish His work would be a monument for the eternal derision of Satan and all his hosts—and that shall never be! God's eternal purpose would fail if He did not bring us in. Let us, therefore, trust in Him, and say, "He will bring us in." Despite the Gergashites, the Hittites and all the other "ites," He will bring us in! Across the Jordan we shall go with our Joshua, Jehovah-Jesus, at our head and we shall take our possession, everyone of us, in that glorious land and stand in our lot in that day, as surely as He has brought us out.

The important point for us to settle is—Has the Lord, indeed, brought us out? If any of you are still in bondage, the Lord make you to feel your bondage! The Lord make you to cry out in the bitterness of your soul! That is half-way towards getting out—that feeling of loathing for your present state is half the battle of your coming out of Egypt! The Lord make you to cry and groan, and look right out of yourselves wholly to the Lord Jesus and if, by the grip of faith, you get hold of my Master's garments, there is none that shall make you lose your hold, for, if you have a hold on Him, He has a firmer hold on you! If you have but touched Him with the finger of faith, He has laid His eternal power under bond to save you and He must and will accomplish the work, great as it is! God has laid help upon One who is mighty, and that mighty One shall never fail. Oh, the bliss of being in Christ! It is to be out of Egypt and it is to have the certain prospect of being, by-and-by, in Heaven!

God bless you all, dear Friends, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: DEUTERONOMY 6.

Verse 1. *Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you go to possess it.* God's commandments are to be taught, but they are also to be practiced—"which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that you might do them." And it is this doing of them that is the hard part of the work. It is not always easy to teach them—a man needs the Spirit of God if he is to teach them aright—but practice is harder than preaching. May God grant us Grace, whenever we hear His Word, to do it!

2. *That you might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you, you, and your son, and your son's son, all the days of your life; and that your days may be prolonged.* The fear of God must always be a practical power in our lives—"that you might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments." And that practical fear should lead us into obedience in de-

tail. We ought so to study God's Word that we endeavor "to keep *all* His statutes and His commandments." A slipshod obedience is disobedience. We must be careful and watchful to know the Divine will and in all respects to carry it out. You who are His children, dwelling in such a household, and with such a Father, it well becomes you to be obedient children. No, it is not only for us to obey the command of the Lord our God, but we should pray till the rest of the verse also comes true—"you, and your son, and your son's son," our children and our children's children. I am sure that if we love God, we shall long that our children and our children's children may love Him, too. If your trade has supported you and brought you in a competence, you will naturally wish to bring your son up to it. But, on a far higher platform, if God has been a good God to you, your deepest desire will be that your son and your son's son should serve the same Divine Master through all the days of their life! "That your days may be prolonged." God does not give long life to all His people, yet in obedience to God is the most probable way of securing long life. There are also many of God's saints who are spared in times of pestilence, or who are delivered by an act of faith out of great dangers. That ancient declaration of God often comes true in these later times, "As the days of a tree are the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." At any rate, you who love the Lord shall live out your days, whereas the wicked shall not live out half their days. You shall complete the circle of life, whether it is a great circle or a little one—with long life will God satisfy you, and show you His salvation. The passage which now follows is held in very great esteem by the Jewish people even to this day. They repeat it frequently, for it forms part of their morning and evening services.

3, 4. *Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with you, and that you may increase mightily, as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you, in the land that flows with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.* There is but one God. This is the very basis of our faith—we know nothing of "gods many and lords many." Yet it is the *Triune God* whom we worship. We are not less Unitarians, in the highest meaning of that word, because we are Trinitarians! We are not less Believers in the one living and true God because we worship Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

5. *And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.* Does not this show what is the very Nature of God? God is Love, for He commands us to love Him!! There was never an earthly prince or king whom I have heard of in whose statute book it was written, "You shall love the king." No. It is only in the Statute Book of Him who is the Lord of Life and Love that we read such a command as this! To my mind it seems a very blessed privilege for us to be permitted to love One so great as God is. Here it is we find our Heaven! It is a command, but we regard it rather as a loving, tender invitation to the highest bliss—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart"—that is, *intensely*. "And with all your soul"—that is, most *sincerely*, most *lovingly*. "And with all your might." With all your energy, with every faculty, with every possibility of your nature.

6. *And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart.* Oh, how blessed to have them written on the heart by the Holy Spirit! We can never get them there except He who made the heart anew shall engrave upon these fleshy tablets the Divine Precepts.

7. *And you shall teach them diligently unto your children.* Christian parent, have you done this? “You shall” not only teach them, but, “teach them diligently unto your children.”

7. *And shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up.* Our common talk should be much more spiritual than it often is. There is no fear of degrading sacred subjects by the frequent use of them—the fear lies much the other way—lest by a disuse of them we come to forget them. This blessed Book, the Holy Word of God, is a fit companion for your leisure as well as for your labor, for the time of your sleeping and the time of your waking. It will bless you in your private meditations and equally cheer the social hearth and comfort you when, in mutual friendship, you speak, the one with the other. Those who truly love God greatly love His holy Word.

8. *And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand.* They shall be your practical guide, at your fingertips, as it were.

8. *And they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.* You shall see *by* them, you shall see *with* them, you shall see *through* them.

9. *And you shall write them upon the posts of your house and on your gates.* I could almost wish that this were literally fulfilled much more often than it is. I was charmed, in many a Swiss village, to see a text of Scripture carved on the doorpost. A text hung up in your houses may often speak when you are silent. We cannot do anything that shall be superfluous in the way of making known the Word of God.

10-12. *And it shall be, when the LORD your God shall have brought you into the land which He swore unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you great and goodly cities, which you built not, and houses full of all good things, which you filled not, and wells dug, which you dug not, vineyards and olive trees, which you planted not; when you shall have eaten and are full; then beware lest you forget the LORD, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.* Bread eaten is soon forgotten. How often we act like dogs that will take the bones from our hand and then forget the hand that gave them! It should not be so with us. All our spiritual mercies and many of our temporal ones are very much like the inheritance of Israel in the land of Canaan—wells that they did not dig, and vineyards which they did not plant. Our blessings come from sources that are beyond our own industry and skill. They are the fruits of the holy inventiveness of God and the splendor and fullness of His thoughtfulness towards His poor children. Let us not forget Him, since evidently He never forgets us!

13-15. *You shall fear the LORD your God, and serve Him, and shall swear by His name. You shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you, (for the LORD your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you, and destroy you from off the face of the earth.* Our God is a jealous God. One said to a Puritan, “Why be so precise?” and he replied, “Be-

cause I serve a precise God.” God has done so much for us, in order to win our hearts, that He ought to have them altogether for Himself. When He has them all, it is all too little—but to divide our heart is to grieve His Spirit and sorely to vex Him.

16-24. *You shall not tempt the LORD your God, as you tempted Him in Massah. You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and His testimonies, and His statutes, which He has commanded you. And you shall do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, to cast out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has spoken. And when your son asks you in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God has commanded you? Then you shall say unto your son, We were Pharaoh’s bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: and the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: and He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He swore unto our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.* Oh, Friends, it will be well when our boys and girls ask us questions like this and when we can give such answers! The great lack of the age in which we live is obedience to God. “Modern thought” has flung off obedience to Divine Revelation—and even in matters relating to social morality, many men reject all idea of anything being commanded of God—they only judge by what appears to them to be either pleasurable or profitable. What is most needed just now is that we, ourselves, and those about us become really conscious of the greatness and Sovereignty of God—and yield ourselves to Him to do as He bids us, when He bids us, where He bids us—and in all things to seek to follow His commandments that He may “preserve us alive, as it is at this day.”

25. *And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us.* That would have been Israel’s righteousness if the people had observed to do all these commandments before the Lord. But it was marred and spoiled by disobedience. We rejoice to know that we who believe in Jesus have a righteousness unto which Israel did not attain, for the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, is our righteousness!

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.**

SECRET SINS DRIVEN OUT BY STINGING HORNETS

NO. 673

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 28, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Moreover the Lord your God will send the hornet among them,
until those who are left,
who hide themselves from you, are destroyed.”
Deuteronomy 7:20.*

LET us spiritualize the story of the conquest of Canaan by the children of Israel. Canaan was given to Abraham and to his seed by a covenant of salt. Our body, soul, and spirit are given to Christ Jesus to be His portion and His heritage—and the newborn principle within us which represents the seed of Israel is to conquer the whole of our manhood for Christ that He may have possession of it in all its powers and passions, parts and faculties. When our Lord Jesus Christ died, He died not only for our souls but also for our bodies—He did not purchase a right to a *part* of us only but to the entire man. He contemplated in His passion the sanctification of us wholly—spirit, soul, and body—that in this triple kingdom He Himself might reign supreme without a rival.

It is the business of the newborn nature which God has given to the regenerate to assert the rights of the Lord Jesus Christ. “My Soul, so far as you are a child of God, you must conquer all the rest of yourself which yet remains unblest. You must subdue all your powers and passions to the silver scepter of Jesus’ gracious reign, and you must never be satisfied till He who is the King by purchase becomes also the King by gracious coronation, and reigns in you supreme.”

Although Israel had Canaan by right, the Jebusites and eight mighty nations had it in possession. And alas, we are made painfully to feel that though Christ has a right to us and He alone should reign in our mortal bodies, yet sin has a dwelling place in us! Those old sins which were born with us and seem as if they will never die till we, ourselves, are wrapped in our winding sheets, have entered into us and will dwell in us. I may say of our nature what was said in Egypt during the plague of frogs: “Behold these filthy things have come up into our chambers and into our ovens, and our kneading troughs.”

There is no part of our heart too hot or too sacred for sin to intrude into it. The whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint—from the sole of the foot even to the head—naturally—there is nothing but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. Sin has entrenched itself in our nature and it is not to be cast out by our mere talking about it nor by our best resolutions. Our sins have chariots of iron, as those of us know who have to contend with them, and their cities are walled up to Heaven their en-

trenchments are so strong! Our sins have so worked themselves into our flesh that our flesh cries out, "Spare them!"

"Surely the bitterness of death is past," said Agag when he came delicately before Samuel. And thus our sins come so delicately to us, assume such pleasant shapes, and are so congenial, that something whispers, "Let them live!" It is hard to slay them—so difficult to cut them up root and branch, for they are in possession—and the new nature is but a babe! "But the old nature is the old man, and it is a very unequal fight between a babe and an old man!" The new nature has just emerged into an atmosphere which is not congenial with it, while the old nature has everything to help it—the devil from beneath, the world from without, and even the cares of business, of life—all seem to act as allies to the old nature.

Meanwhile the new nature has to fight alone. If the Eternal Spirit were not our helper, and if He who is the Father of our new nature were not also its support and its succor, long ago it would have died and been utterly cut off by the hosts of its foes! Christ and holiness have a *right* to us, but sin is in possession.

What then, Beloved? Why this—since sin has no right to any part of us, we go about a good and legal warfare when we seek, in the name of God, to drive it out! O my Body, you are a member of Christ! Shall I take you and subjugate you to the Prince of Darkness? O my Soul, Christ has suffered for your sins and redeemed you with His most precious blood! Shall I suffer your memory to become a storehouse of evil, or your passions to become firebrands of iniquity? Shall I surrender my judgment to be perverted by error, or my will to be led in fetters of iniquity?

No, my Soul, you are Christ's, and sin has no right to you. Sin shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under Law but under Grace. Christ has bought us and paid for us! God has willed us over to Christ. We belong to Him! We are His portion and His reward. Sin has no legal right, then, but it has possession—and you know *that* is nine points of the law. But we will dispute the nine points! We will bring the one grand point—that God, the Judge of all, has decided that the blood-bought belong to Christ! And we will fight it out even to the death against these, our sins!

We are told if we read this chapter in a spiritual sense that we must in no way suffer any kind or sort of truce with sin. I believe that many Believers—I hope they are Believers—have given up warring with a part of their sins. They are not drunkards, they are not thieves. They are not given to uncleanness of walk or language. But theirs may be a hasty temper and they do not try to subdue that. They think that that is *constitutional*, and they plead for it as though it must be spared! This one tribe—these Jebusites—must be spared according to their sinful talk.

But oh, Beloved, I have no more right as a Christian to suffer bad temper to dwell in me than I have to suffer the devil himself to dwell there! I know it has been said very often that Divine Grace is often grafted on a crab tree stock. So it is. But in this *spiritual* husbandry the graft will influence all below as well as that which is above it. What is the fruit of it? Is it a crab tree? No! The fruit does not come from the crab tree, but from the *better* nature! And though I am grafted upon a crab tree, yet my fruit must partake of the *new nature*, and I must bring forth sweet fruit.

Some people think—or perhaps they may not know it—that they are naturally troubled with pride, that they have naturally a high spirit, or a haughty temper. And when they are told of it they grow rough with whomever dares to mention it! And they think this is not a sin. But, oh, Beloved, pride in a Christian is one of the most loathsome vices! What can there be in you and in me to be proud of? Owing all we have to the gift of God—having nothing but what He gives us, and going back to our own poverty unless God keeps us—how dare we lift up our head?

God smote Nebuchadnezzar and made him go and eat grass like the ox, and his hair grew like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws—all because of his pride! And some of God's dear children have been suffered to make dreadful falls of it, and all because they were lifted up and said, "I shall never be moved, my mountain stands firm." We must beware of these sins and not make a truce or parley with them! I must not say of any one sin, "I cannot help it, and therefore I will not contend with it."

Beloved, down with them! Down with them all! In the name of God we must destroy them, or else they will destroy us! I may say of our sins what a Scotch officer said to his soldiers when taken in an ill position. Said he, "My lads, there are the enemy! Kill them, or they will kill you!" And so must I say of *all* sins. There they are! Destroy them, or they will destroy you! Your only way of entering into eternal life is by being more than a conqueror through Him who has loved you. You know how it is written, "To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna," but to such only. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

And as we are not, thus, to excuse some sins and permit them to live, so, above all, we must not fall into a dispirited state of mind and suppose we never can drive sins out. I do not think we shall ever be perfect in this life, but how near to perfection a Christian may come is a question which I should not like to discuss in words, but prefer endeavoring to find out in *practice*. How much a Believer may be like Christ I will not venture to affirm, but certainly there have been some men upon earth of whom we might say, without exaggeration, that you might take them for an example, for their Master seemed to live again in them.

There is no need that you should always give way to pride, or sloth, or covetousness, or any other form of sin. You are able to overcome them—not in your own strength—the weakest of them would be too much for you in that. But you may overcome them through the blood of the Lamb! "This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith," and our faith will be able to subdue these sins. Just as faith of old put to flight the armies of the aliens, so it can even to this day. Do not, then, dear Friends, ask, "How shall I dispossess them, for they are greater and mightier than I?" Go to the strong for strength and wait humbly upon God, and He, the mighty God of Jacob, will surely come to the rescue and you shall have to sing of victory through His Grace!

There is a word of encouragement given in the chapter to those who have a tendency to doubt in this matter. Israel was reminded that God brought them out of Egypt. He delivered them from the house of bondage. And you are reminded, dear Friends, that you are saved! Christ has done a greater work for you than remains to be accomplished in you. To bear

the weight of your sins and to break the iron yoke of spiritual bondage from off your necks required that Christ should die! And that being done, it is, comparatively, but a light work to deliver you from indwelling sin. The greater work is done!

Jehovah became Man in human flesh. He lived on earth. God, the Word, was made flesh and dwelt among us, and in due time stooped, in His obedience, even to death, the death of the Cross! All your sins have been destroyed by Christ and there is no condemnation for you to dread since Christ has died. You are forgiven! The yoke is snatched from off your shoulders! You are made free by the Son, and you are free, indeed! You are in the wilderness, it is true, but you have come through the Red Sea where your sins have been drowned. Your enemies, your old sins, you shall see no more! The manna falls about your camp. The fiery, cloudy pillar leads you through the wilderness.

And since you have seen what God has done, will you be afraid as to the future? Courage, courage! He never begins without intending to finish. It shall never be said of Him, "This man began to build, but was not able to complete the structure." Courage, courage! He has not brought you out of Egypt that you may be destroyed. What would the heathen say concerning your God, if, after all, you should fall and perish? You shall win the day! You shall have every inch of the promised land—only be strong and be very courageous—for the Lord will surely drive out your sins and take your body, soul, and spirit as a consecrated and holy possession forever.

But there is a notion among some Christians who are but little instructed, and who, knowing nothing of experience, that sanctification is an *instantaneous* work. There are some who think that the moment they believe in Jesus they shall never be troubled with any sin again, whereas, it is *then* that the battle begins! The moment sin is forgiven it ceases to be my friend and becomes my deadly foe. When the *guilt* of sin is gone then the *power* of sin becomes obnoxious and we begin to strive against it. Every now and then we hear of friends who cannot understand my teaching on this point. They say they do not feel any sort of uprising sin within themselves.

Oh, Beloved, I wish you did! For I am afraid you know nothing of the Gospel life if you do not. I will not give a penny for your religion if it has no inward conflict. Even virtuous heathens have got farther than that—for some of them have written that they felt themselves to be as two men contending or fighting—and surely Christians have got farther still, or ought to have! This, I know, be it what it may with you—I have to fight every day to get but one inch nearer to Heaven! And I feel I will be wrestling at the last moment—that I shall have a scuffle upon Jordan's brink with my corruptions.

Remember how John Knox had it! He had fought with men—I may say he had fought with beasts at Ephesus—and yet at his last expiring moments he had the sternest struggle he had ever known with self-righteousness. You would have thought, "Surely John Knox could not be self-righteous!" The man who had denounced all trusting in good works was yet vexed with the very same thing he had denounced. And so it will

be with you. No matter how near you live to God, or how closely you follow Christ, you will have more or less of evil to contend with still. No, I must say the more holy you get, the more you will have to fight against sin. The whiter a garment becomes, the more easily is a spot seen—and the more you get like Christ the more you will detect how unlike Him you are!

A spiritual sense will be quickened so that you will discover that to be sin which you did not think to be evil. And you will often feel, when you are most progressing in Grace, you are not growing at all, or if so, certainly it seems to be downward. When I think myself most unholy, I am most holy—and when I bemoan my own sinfulness, then am I most likely to be accepted of God! It is best to think little of one's self. But whether you do or not, take this for granted—you will have to drive out your sins little by little—they will not all be cast out at once—it will be a *life's* work. And you will never have to take off your armor or sheath your sword till you go to the warrior's bed and rest in the grave.

I now wish to call your attention specially to the verse before us. It appears that after a long conflict with Canaan, some of these old inhabitants still existed. They hid themselves in caves, and so on—but they were to be fetched out by a very singular means—hornets. These hornets were to discover them and bring them out—perhaps sting them to death, or, if not, make them come out to be slain by the children of Israel.

Three things are to be noticed, then, this morning. The first is sins which are left and saved in us—even in us who have for many years been followers of Christ. Secondly, a singular means of destroying them. And then, thirdly, a suggestive lesson for us all—teaching us to examine our own hearts for these secret sins.

I. And first, dear Friends, SINS WHICH ARE LEFT AND HIDDEN. John Bunyan very wisely describes the town of Mansoul after it had been taken by Prince Immanuel. The Prince rode to the Castle called the Heart and took possession of it and the whole city became His. But there were certain Diabolonians, followers of Diabolus, who never left the town. They could not be seen in the streets. They could not be heard in the markets. They never dared to occupy a house, but lurked about in certain old dens and caves.

Some of them got impudent enough even to hire themselves out for servants to the men of Mansoul under other names. There was Mr. Covetousness who was called Mr. Prudent Thrifty. And there was Mr. Lasciviousness, who was called Mr. Harmless Mirth. They took other names and lived there, much to the annoyance of the town of Mansoul. They skulked about in holes and corners, and only came out on dark days when they could do mischief and serve the Black Prince.

Now in all of us, however watchful we may be, though we may set Mr. Pry Well to listen at the door and he may watch, and my Lord Mayor, Mr. Understanding, is very careful to search all these out, yet there will remain much hidden sin. I think we ought always to pray to God to forgive us sins that we do not know anything about. "Your unknown agonies," says the old Greek liturgy. And there are unknown sins for which those agonies make atonement. Perhaps the sins which you and I confess are

not a tenth of what we really commit. Our eyes are not sufficiently opened to know of the heinousness of our own sin—and it is possible that if we could fully know the extent of our own sinfulness it would drive us mad!

It is possible that God, in His mercy, suffers us to be somewhat blind to the abominable accursedness of sin. He gives us enough of it to make us hate it, but not enough to drive us absolutely to despair. Our sin is exceedingly sinful. Now allow me to suggest that among the sins which lurk in us there is the old one of unbelief. You have had a very great deliverance, my dear Brothers and Sisters, and you think you have no more unbelief left in you. You do not know that old villain, Unbelief, is never to be taken by the heels, or if he is put in the stocks, he soon manages to escape.

You will have unbelief this very afternoon, if you happen to meet with any trouble, and though now you say, “I never can stagger at the promise through unbelief,” I should not wonder but what a little depression of spirits, perhaps weariness in God’s service, might make you to be as doubting as ever you were in your life! Do not harbor the pleasing delusion that your unbelief is dead. It is hidden, but it will come out again. Especially among these lurkers I must mention pride. Oh, we think, “How could I be proud? Why I have been through such an experience of my own weakness and sinfulness that I cannot be proud.” We little think that all the while we are talking we are saying about the proudest thing that we could possibly say!

I talked once, I remember, with a man who thought himself a very eminent Christian. He told me that what with affliction and experience the Lord had wiped pride completely out of him. I said, “He must have hit you very hard, Brother.” I thought, while he was talking, he was the *incarnation* of pride, but I did not remember that I, myself, was probably quite as bad for thinking I should not like to have talked as he did. Pride is such a cunning thing! It likes to wear the robes of a prince but it is satisfied to wear the rags of a beggar if it cannot. So long as it may get into our *hearts* it cares not what shape it assumes.

That detestable sin of pride—we can all condemn it in other people—and yet probably we have, each one, got a leaven of it, even in our spirits, at this very moment. You are a proud thing, my Brother. You are a proud thing, my Sister. There is still pride lurking in us all! And beside these there is also a great amount of wrath and ill temper in us. Oh, we think there is no one so good-tempered as we are—we have not betrayed ourselves into an angry word for months! Yes, but it is very easy to be good-tempered when you have it all your own way. It is a very easy thing to be amiable, and kind, and loving, and never to be angry when the wife is so kind, and the children obedient, and the servants attentive, and business prospers!

But, my dear Brothers and Sisters, how would it be if matters were to change, and they may very soon? Suppose you were irritated as Brother So-and-So is—what then? You know we are not to judge the man by the circumstances—we must judge him intrinsically by himself. A barrel of gunpowder is not very dangerous to sit upon or to have under one’s bed at night, or to make a pillow of. It is a very safe thing, indeed, provided that

there is no fire anywhere about. It has not blown up, and yet it has been under one's couch all the while. Ah, but if the sparks had happened to fly, as they do fly in your neighbor's house across the road, can you say that your powder is quite different from his powder?

And I think sometimes when we think we have destroyed anger, and put down the tendency of wrath, it is only because the Canaanite has hidden himself and we cannot see him! But he is still there and may come out again one day. So is it often with our discontent and rebellion. I do not know that I am discontent—several of you can say the same. You feel happy this morning, grateful and thankful. You can sing—

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

Yes, but you must not be too sure that you have no discontent left in your heart. Now suppose—and the supposition is so easy to make—suppose your best beloved should sicken and die? You can bless a *giving* God—could you bless a *taking* God? Suppose that your riches took to themselves wings, and every one of them should fly away? Could you still praise the God who is as good when He takes as when He gives? Brethren, we know not of what spirit we are. When we fancy we could run with the horsemen, it were well to remember that we have not always been able to run with the footmen! And when we fancy such-and-such a friend behaved ill in deep affliction, it were well if we remembered ourselves often, lest we also should repine—for discontent may be one of the sins lurking in our soul.

Moreover, idolatry is a sin that is often found there. You do not know that you idolize your child, and you will never know it until that child dies—but then you will find it out. You do not know that you idolize your substance. But if it were gone, or you had to give it up and were ready, like Job's wife to say, “Curse God and die,” you would then discover that it was your golden calf. Idolatry has been the sin of all ages and all times. Those dear children of God, whose hearts should tell of Jehovah, and Jehovah alone, have need to keep careful watch lest at the same time they indulge self-confidence which is only another form of idolatry—the worship of ourselves instead of God.

Let us beware lest we indulge in self-satisfaction, and think that our righteousness is something satisfactory after all. It is a blessed thing to find idolatry out, but it will hide itself if it can. It is well to consider the question, “How is it these things hide themselves in us? Other people find them out—how is it *we* cannot find them?” It is certain that you can detect other men's faults, but you cannot detect your own! The lookers-on often see more than the players, and we sometimes perceive more at a distance than when we approach near.

The fact is that partiality to ourselves blinds us to our own imperfections and makes us see the mote in our brother's eye though there is a beam in our own! In many cases this ignorance arises from want of searching. It is not pleasant work to seek out faults—“take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines.” It is not easy work. We do not like finding out sin. Too many of us are lazy about religion—we do the work of God deceitfully, we do not search our hearts with candles and try our-

selves as with crucibles as in a furnace—we are not purified seven times over, and so sin escapes for want of a hearty search to find it out.

Besides, sin is so subtle it changes its shape. If Satan cannot shoot us from above, he will do it from below. If he cannot assail us in the head, he will seek to cast us down by tripping us with the foot. Sins of every shape, form and hue come upon us, and the great probability is that in trying to kill one sin we shall fall into another. Often in aiming to attain to a virtue we have overshot the mark and gone into a vice. We have wanted to honor God and humble ourselves, and then we have grown mean in spirit. We wanted to be noble and bold, and have grown intimidating. We wanted to be loving, and we grew to be falsely charitable, tolerating sin. We wanted to be stern against sin, and have grown bitter against friends who have fallen into it. We mistake the narrow road and break the hedge either on the right hand or on the left.

It is the subtlety of sin that makes it so hard for us to find it out. Besides, Beloved, we have fallen into the bad habit of comparing and contrasting ourselves with others. We are constantly indulging in the supposition, "Oh, well, I am better than some." We look at our fellow Christians and see their inconsistencies, and say, "Well, I do not do *that*." The Pharisaic prayer is very common, even among Christians, I am afraid, "Lord, I thank You that I am not as other men." The preacher himself, though he might preach humility to you, sometimes gets to comparing himself with other preachers, and his hearers, he doubts not, do the same.

"Oh," you think, "I am more quick in God's work, more earnest than some Christians. I wish they would wake up, too." But, while we are censuring them, we are really laying a flattering unction to our own souls by supposing we are so much better and that we have cut off so much of our own sins. Oh, Beloved, take heed of comparing yourselves with others, for this is not wise!

Come to Christ and look at Him, and then your faults will be apparent. View His perfection, and in the light of *that* your own infirmities will soon be discovered. But if you look at your Brother's righteousness, which is but little better than yours, and perhaps not as good, you will be apt to get proud and lifted up—and so fall into sin. I shall not, however, enlarge upon this point. There are, no doubt, in all of us, Canaanites still dwelling in the land that will be thorns in our side.

II. Now, secondly, A SINGULAR MEANS FOR THEIR DESTRUCTION—"YOUR GOD WILL SEND THE HORNET AMONG THEM." These fellows resorted to caves and dens. God employed the very best means for their destruction. I suppose these hornets were large wasps—two or three times, perhaps, as large as a wasp—with very terrible stings. It is not an unusual historical fact to find districts depopulated by means of stinging insects. In connection with the journey of Dr. Livingstone, we can never forget that strange kind of guest which is such a pest to the cattle in any district that the moment it appeared they had either to fly before it or to die.

The hornet must have been a very terrible creature. But it is not at all extraordinary that there should have been hornets capable of driving out a nation. The hornet was a very simple means. It was no sound of trumpet, nor even the glitter of miracles—it was a simple, natural means of

fetching these people out of their holes. It is well known that insects in some countries will sting one race of people and not another. Sometimes the inhabitants of a country are not at all careful about mosquitoes, or such creatures, when strangers are greatly pestered with them.

God could, therefore, bring hornets which would sting the Jebusites but not molest the Israelites, and in this way the Canaanites were driven out of their holes. Some died by the stings of hornets and others were put in the way of the sharp swords of the men of Israel, and thus they died. The spiritual analogy to this is the daily trouble which God sends to every one of us. I suppose you have all got your hornets. Some have hornets in the family. Your child may be a hornet to you—your wife, your husband, your brother, the dearest friend you have—may be a daily cross to you. And, though a dead cross is very heavy, a living cross is heavier by far.

To bury a child is a great grief, but to have that child live and sin against you is ten times worse. You may have hornets that shall follow you to your bedchamber—some of you may know what that means—so that even where you ought to find your rest and your sweetest solace, it is there that you receive your bitterest stings of trouble. The hornet will sometimes come in the shape of business. You are perplexed—you cannot prosper—one thing comes after another. You seem to be born to trouble more than other people. You have ventured on the right hand, but it was a failure. You pushed out on the left, but that was a breakdown.

Almost everybody you trust fails immediately and those you do not trust are the people you might have safely relied upon. You seem to be infested with those hornets in your business to make everything go ill with you. You have perplexity upon perplexity—nothing so serious as to be your ruin—but a deal of fretful trouble which keeps you uneasy. Others have hornets in their bodies. Some have constant headaches—aches and pains pass and shoot along the nerves of others. If you could but be rid of it, you think, how happy you would be! But you have got your hornet and that hornet is always with you.

If I tried to get through the whole list of hornets I should need all the morning, for there is a particular grief to every man. Each man has his own form of obnoxious sting which he has to feel. You will come running to your friend sometimes, and say, “Oh, I have such trouble! So-and-So has been saying such-and-such a thing of me. If I had not so many bad neighbors I should get on. This is the worst trouble a man could have.” You do not know, you do not know. The heart knows its own bitterness. There is a skeleton in every closet. Every man has a shoe that pinches more or less—and there is not a Christian on earth who has not a hornet!

But what are they for? They are sent with the same object with which God sent hornets into Canaan, namely, to drive out the Canaanites! And I shall have to show you that they do so. Your hornets drive you to *prayer*. Just put in the word hornet into the verse we have been singing—

***“Hornets make the promise sweet,
Hornets give new life to prayer,
Hornets bring me to His feet,
Lay me low and keep me there,”***

and you have got the drift of what these daily hornets do. You would not pray if you had not trouble! I am afraid you would grow lax, cold, indiffer-

ent—but these sting you, and you say, “I must go to my God for comfort under this pest, this nuisance.”

Why, what a blessing that is for you to be stung to your Father’s feet—blessed sting that brings you there! You would not value the promises half as much if it were not for the hornets. You turn to some precious Word of God that just suits your case, and you say, “I never saw such sweetness in that as I do now. Blessed be God for sending a passage so suitable to my condition.” The hornets take you to the promise, and seem to point you to the place where the milk and honey flow.

And how they also tend to lay you at His feet after you have been hasty in temper! After you have felt how proud you must have been, all because of the hornet that brought the pride out, you have gone to God and said, “Lord, I did not think I was such a fool. I should not have believed it. If anyone had said to me yesterday, ‘You would do so-and-so,’ I would have said, ‘Is your servant a dog that I should do such a thing?’ But this has so troubled me, bit me in a sore place, irritated me, that I could not bear it that I have done what I would not have done for all the world.”

That just shows what there was there before. You see, if sin had not been in you, it could not have come out! All the trouble in the world does not put sin in the Christian—it brings it out. And just as disease is all the better when it is fetched out to the surface, that so its power in the interior may be destroyed, so is it a blessing—a painful blessing—when the hornet comes and makes us see the evil that otherwise would have lain hidden in us. You know, my dear Friends, practically, I dare say what I mean.

The other day you were in such a heavenly frame of mind—you had had half an hour alone, or had just come home from Tabernacle and enjoyed the service, and something patted you on the back and said, “How you are grown in Divine Grace!” You did not say it in words, but you did *think*, “Well, I am getting on. There is something good in me after all.” When you got home, perhaps the meat was badly cooked, or there was something done the very opposite to what you had wished, and it seemed to be done on *purpose* to irritate *you*. You thought so, and without a moment’s consideration you said some very strong words—very strong, indeed!

Then something came and touched you on the other shoulder and said, “Ah, is this growing in Divine Grace?” And you felt very humbled, taken down a great many notches. And when you went upstairs to bed, if you had gone up there without that hornet, your prayer would have been a Pharisee’s prayer! But as it was, when you got there all you could say was, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” The hornet had done you a world of good! It might have fetched out a little bad temper, but for all that it had fetched out your pride and self-conceit.

The daily troubles we have are meant to drive us to God, to drive us to the promise, and also to show us where our weak points are in order that we may contend with all our might against them. I believe, my dear Friends, that the hardest-hearted, most cross-grained, and most unlovely Christians in all the world are those who never have had much trouble! And those who are the most sympathizing, loving, and Christ-like, are generally those that have the most affliction. The worst thing that can

happen to any of us is to have our path made too smooth, and one of the greatest blessings that ever the Lord gave us was a *cross*.

“I should never have been able to see,” said one, “if I had not been blind.” And said another, “I should never have been able to run the race set before me if I had not broken my leg.” Our infirmities are channels of blessing! Our difficulties, trials, vexations, and perplexities are most sweet and blessed means of Grace to our souls. I think we ought to be very thankful to God for the hornet. Says one, “I am not.” “No trial for the present seems to be joyous but grievous. Nevertheless afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

When you are in a sane mind, my dear Brothers and Sisters, and God the Holy Spirit really teaches you to be wise, you will go and thank God for hornets. “Lord, I bless You that You have not left me unchastised. I praise You for the cares and troubles which are so unpleasant to my flesh, by which that flesh is mortified. I thank You, Father.” You never hear a child say this, but if it were a wise child it would. “I thank You, my Father, for the rod. I thank You, O my God, that You have not let me have my own will, that You have blighted my prospects, crossed my hopes, marred my plans, cast down my expectations, taken away my joys. I thank You, O You great Liberator, for having broken the golden bars of my cage to give my spirit liberty, and for having snapped the bonds of my captivity which bound me to the earth, that I might be able to mount upwards to Yourself.” Whenever you are singing God’s praise, say, “He sent us hornets, for His mercy endures forever: let Him be blessed evermore.”

There is one point I want you to notice in the text. It would be guilt on my part to pass it without observation, and that is we are expressly told the hornets came from God. He sent them. “The Lord your God will send the hornet.” This will help you, perhaps, to bear their stings another time. God weighs your troubles in scales and measures out your afflictions, every drachma and scruple of them. And since they come, therefore, directly from a loving Father’s hand, accept them with grateful cheerfulness! And pray that the result which Divine Wisdom has ordained to flow from them may be abundantly realized in your sanctification—in being made like Christ.

III. And now I have to close by observing that we have here A VERY SUGGESTIVE LESSON TO OURSELVES, a lesson which we have already anticipated, but let us repeat it. It is this. What is my particular besetting sin? Have I been careful in self-examination? Have I issued a constant search warrant against the subtle forms of evil? If not, I must expect to have the hornet. God never *punishes* His children for sin, but He *chastens* them for it paternally. You may often discover what your sin is by the chastisement, for you can see the face of the sin in the chastisement—the one is so like the other.

Dear Friend, what is your particular trouble today—what hornet stings you? Go to God with Job’s request, “Show me why You contend with me.” If the consolations of God are small with you, it is because there is some secret sin in you. Look at the trouble you have today and see if you cannot discover the sin. A disobedient child—is it possible that you also are living in some act of disobedience to your heavenly Father? Is it a servant

who annoys you? Is it possible that you also are an ill servant of the King, idle and indifferent to His command?

Is it a loss in business? May it not be possible that you are not attending to *God's* business, and therefore His Church is a loser and therefore He makes you a loser in your own business? Is it sickness in the flesh? May there not be some spiritual sickness there which is necessary to keep in check and to subdue? Has someone else treated you haughtily? May you not also be haughty? Has another slandered you and are you smarting under it? Have you ever spoken against the children of God? May you not have an itching tongue, too, and God is making you feel the smart of it so that you may mind how you remove the bridle from the unruly tongue?

Has someone undervalued your labor and spoken depreciatingly of your motives? May you not also have had hard thoughts concerning some of your Brethren in Christian labors? Do you feel, just now, under great depression of spirit? Is it not possible that you have neglected to enter into fellowship with Christ in His suffering, and therefore He is bringing you down into it by force? I know not how it may be with you, Beloved, but this I know—I have not searched my own soul as I would desire to do in the future. I would wish to find out everything that is within me that is evil—that it may be dragged forth and executed at once!

It is stern work. It is work that never could be done if it were not for that precious assurance that God is with us. God, the mighty God of Jacob, will have us to be His people. He has prepared a Heaven for a perfect people and He will make us perfect that He may neither lose us, nor the place He has prepared for us. He has sworn by Himself He will never leave you. He will, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm drive out your lusts and corruptions till you shall be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect!

Come, then, you men of war, take to your harness and buckle on your armor, and nerve your souls for combat! “You have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” “Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be weary” in yourselves. And now—from now on, and forever—fight the good fight for the crown that fades not away.

I have been speaking to saved ones, and to saved ones, only. But you that are unsaved will have the hornets, too. Only those hornets will be of no use to you! They will sting you *away* from God, rather than to Him. Your troubles will only make you dislike and hate the Most High the more. Oh that His Grace would visit you and change your heart! And then, maybe your trials might be sanctified to fetch you to your Father's face. May it be so, and His shall be the glory evermore. Amen.

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MOSES' DYING CHARGE TO ISRAEL

NO. 2345

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 28, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 17, 1888.**

***“And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments, or no.”
Deuteronomy 8:2.***

These are the words of Moses, the man of God, when he was near his departure. They make up a part of what has been called his “swan song.” He did not often sing—he did give us at least one song, but when he came near the time he was to die, like the fabled swan, he began to sing—and most sweetly did he sing!

Notice the intense earnestness of this address. It is, every way, that of a saint who has spent his life in loving anxiety for the people committed to his charge. And the ruling passion is very strong upon him to the last. He knows that he is about to depart from them, for he has had his marching orders—“Get you up into the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with your eyes, for you shall not go over this Jordan.” Knowing that he is about to leave the people, he is very anxious about their welfare and he addresses them with this deep earnestness.

Note, also, how practical his earnestness is—it is concerning their lives that he speaks to the children of Israel. He knows how liable they are to fall into the superstitions of their neighbors, how likely they, who made a golden calf and angered the Lord and His servant, will be to turn, again, unto graven images and strange gods. And so he beseeches them, as with his dying breath, to observe all the Commandments of the Lord and to cleave closely unto Jehovah, their God.

Then, like an old man, again, for this is a point that would be sure to come out in a venerable, soon-departing saint, he talks about the past. He has been preserved by his God for 120 years and, during the last 40 of those years, he has been king in Jeshurun and the Lord has made him ride upon the high places of the earth in the wonders that he has worked by His hand. And he cannot help reminding the people that the marvels God has accomplished must not be dead things to them, not things to be laid by like mummies wrapped up in sere clothes—and hidden away in a sarcophagus—but they must be living mercies to them, still, since they came from a living God and they must continue to produce in them living

gratitude and living service. I like this thought—it seems to teach us how, as we mature in life, we shall become more and more anxious about practical holiness and we shall, more and more, draw the argument for it from our own experience of the goodness of God. With the Psalmist, we shall cry, “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar,” and what cords can be stronger than the cords of love and the bands of a man, even gratitude at the remembrance of all the loving kindness of the Lord? I cannot imagine that the iron chains of necessity, or the steel bonds of fear can ever hold men so firmly to duty and virtue as these silken bands of thankfulness at the recollection of all the Lord’s Grace and mercy to us. May we feel these love-bands about us as we meditate upon these words of Israel’s great leader!

I invite you, then, first of all, to consider *the leading of God which is to be remembered*. And, secondly, *the objectives of that leading*, which also are well worthy of remembrance.

I. First, then, consider THE LEADING TO BE REMEMBERED—“You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness.” Some of you can knock out that word, “forty,” and put in, “fifty,” or, “sixty.” I know some here who can say, “seventy!” I can even see some who can put in, “eighty,” years, not of life, merely, but of Divine leading, for there are some, here, who have been led of the Lord, in their own experience, no less a space than that longest period I have named!

The first thing that we note, here, about the children of Israel is that *they had a God*. And the first thing for us to remember, tonight, is that God ever had anything at all to do with us, that we ever had a God. “You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you.” We have not been led by a stranger, but by our own God! And we have not been led by a human shepherd, but the Lord has been our Shepherd! Though He counts the number of the stars and calls them all by their names, and leads the hosts of Heaven in their marches through illimitable space, yet has He not disdained to lead us! Unhappy men, who have no God! Saints are poor, sometimes, but they do not know the poverty of the man who has no God! No gold, no silver—this is an inconvenience, but no God—*this is death in the midst of life!* Glory be to God, there are some of His people who, though they have barely sufficient food and raiment, and though scant is the portion of their lot below, yet they have a God—and he who has a God is rich to all the intents of bliss! There are infinite mines of un-failing wealth just beneath his feet—he has but to dig a little to find all that he needs in God. It is a blessed thing to have God when you have all things beside, and to find God in all things, but it is an equally blessed thing to have God when you have *nothing* else and to find all things in God! There is but a slight change in the order of the words and I think there is not much change in the real sense as to true happiness.

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, what a wonder it is that God should have looked upon you and me with eyes of love! Well, I can leave off wondering that He should have loved some of you, but I never shall leave off being astonished that He should ever have regarded me with complacency and

love! Nobody in this place sings with greater emphasis than I do, that verse of which many of you are also so fond—

***“What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
‘Twas even so, Father,’ you always must sing,
‘Because it seemed good in Your sight.’”***

The Sovereign Mercy of God, born in His own bosom, nurtured from His own heart, could only have induced Him to look with love upon us!

But what love it has been! No commonplace love, no ordinary affection. Mothers have loved us, fathers have loved us. We know the love of a fond spouse and the love of children and of friends, but these are only like twinkling glowworm sparks, while the love of God seems, to us, to be the very sun, blazing in full glory in the heavens! He loved us—to what shall I compare His love? He loved us as He loved His only-begotten Son. No, He seemed to love us even more than that, for He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. He loved us better than He loved Himself, for, in order that we might live, He put Himself to that great loss of tearing His Only-Begotten from the place of His everlasting abode in peace. Oh, wonder of wonders, that God should ever have loved us so! “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” This glorious Truth of God is enough to make us all spring to our feet, feeling that we are in the Presence of the miraculous and the Divine, as, indeed, we are!

More than that, if more can be, we have to tell the wonderful story of the love of God, the Son, and of the love of the Spirit, which made the love of the Father and the love of the Son to be effectual, for the Spirit came to us and turned our hearts into the way of faith and we embraced the Son, whom, in our blindness we had despised. Oh, let us tell, tonight, tell to our own hearts if we cannot speak it out, the wondrous love which has given us a God at all, that Father, Son and Holy Spirit should have such condescending dealings with us!

In the next place, Moses not only said that Israel had a God, but that *God had led them*. I am not going to preach, to-night—I am only going to try to get you to think of how God has led you—and you will do that all the better if I keep gratefully thinking in my own mind of how He has led me. Oh, how He led some of us—

***“When Satan’s blind slaves,
We sported with death”!***

We would have damned ourselves before conversion if we had been left to ourselves, but God, every now and then, held back our rebellious hand and checked our wayward will. “I girded you,” said He to Cyrus, “though you have not known Me.” And so it was with us, full often, the Lord girded us—what if I say that He put the bit in our mouth when we were like leviathan and a hook in our jaws when we were like a crocodile and wildly refused to know anything that could tame us? He held us back from evil and led us in the right way and oh, the sweet way in which He led us to the Cross! He drove us and he drew us/ With the Law He sternly lashed us. With His love He deftly drew us. And oh, the Glory of the Light when

He brought us to it! Yet we shut our eyes and rushed back into the darkness!

But He would have us see the Light of God, so we were sweetly forced to come and the scales dropped off our eyes and we saw that sight, the like of which we have often seen since then, but the like of which we never imagined in our blind estate! Oh, to be led to Jesus! If there were nothing else for us but just to be led to lie at His feet and weep ourselves away in penitence, and get back, again, to joyous communion with Him by a believing confidence—If there were no other leading than that, we might well ask for a well-tuned harp and never wish to rest our fingers, but continue forever to smite its strings in sweetest minstrelsy of praise!

Many days have passed since then, Beloved, with some of us, since those early days when we hoped for salvation, when we grasped the promises, when we rested on the finished work of Christ, when we had our first trembling joy in believing—and all the way we have been led so singularly. I could not tell you how I came to be where I now am except by saying, “He leads me! He leads me!” Could you tell how *you* came to be where you are? Was there not a time when, if anyone had said you would be what you are, and where you are, you would have despised him, for you hated the thought of it? And was there not another time when you would have laughed outright and said, “It can never be. What? I have a good hope of Heaven? I who now stand trembling on the brink of the abyss? What? Be numbered with the children, when it will be a marvel of mercy if I am ever allowed to eat a crumb with the dogs under the table?” Yet it is so and the Lord has led you. He has led some of us where the track was as narrow as a razor’s edge. He has led us where black darkness was on either side and with half a slip we would have been in Hell! He has led us where we could not see our way and where, if we could have seen it, we might have swooned for very fright, yet we are safe. He has led us through the furnace and not so much as a smell of fire has been upon us! He has led us when we have been, like Jonah, in the depths of the sea in very despair! And yet we are safe on dry land. Glory be to the Divine Leader who has led us by a right way, bringing us by a way that we knew not, thus far *en route* for the City that has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God! We praise Him tonight for having led us thus far.

But that is not all. Moses bade the Israelites remember that they had a God and that He had led them. But he also wanted the people to remember that *their way had been through the wilderness*—“You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness.” So far as any ministry to our spiritual needs is concerned, this world is a wilderness. There is every temporal comfort provided for us and yet, with all those temporal comforts, there is such a thing as having a starved soul. What is there in this world that can minister to the requirements of a spiritual man? Nothing! As well might Israel in the wilderness have devoured the stones of the desert as any man live upon what this world can furnish him of spiritual meat. It is a wilderness and there are scorpions in it, perhaps one of them has bitten you today. And there are

fiery serpents—you may meet a lot of them tomorrow. And there are Amalekites that seek to destroy the hindmost of us!

And there are all kinds of other evils and mischiefs in this wilderness. Do not let us imagine that we have got to Heaven just yet! I think I have known some Brothers and Sisters who have thought that they were almost there. They have taken off their winterproofs and overcoats, and laid them by, thinking they would never need them again. Ah, my good mariner, you will need that oilskin suit yet! There may be many a rough night for you, yet, before you cross the narrow sea! We have not yet come unto the fair havens of eternal peace. You sing, sometimes—

***“My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this.”***

Well, perhaps you would like to stay there, but you are not to do so. “Go forward,” says the Lord, and in going forward, you may have to endure many trials of which you have never dreamed—for it is still a wilderness through which you are journeying.

Now, I want you to remember that all these years God has led you through the wilderness and, still being in the wilderness, this fact ought to comfort you. If you should be in the wilderness for another 20 years, the God who has led you 40 years can lead you another twenty. The God who has led some of you dear Sisters here present 80 years—can you not trust Him for the other four, five, 10, or whatever number it may be? You do not expect to reach a thousand years old, I am sure, but if you did, the God who kept Methuselah could also keep you! And if Enoch could walk with God for 300 years at a stretch, so may we, with God leading us! If we live as many years as there are days in the year, God has said, “As your days, so shall your strength be,” and He will bring us safely through. Let us not forget that.

Then we have to remember something more about the children of Israel and that I have already anticipated, namely, that *God had led them forty years in the wilderness*. It is often the length of an experience that is the trial of it. “In the wilderness”—that is bad enough, but, “forty years in the wilderness”—that is the test of endurance! Plenty of people seem to start rightly but they have no staying power. With all the foes we have to face in the wilderness, who is able to endure? Who? Why, the man who has God with him and God within him! He will endure to the end and, “He that endures to the end shall be saved.” But here is that which makes a long life so trying—that all the while you are in *the wilderness*. Yet here is, also, your consolation, for, long as your life has been, yet the Lord has led you through that very respectable period of 40 years. Surely you cannot, now, doubt as to His ability to lead you and keep you even to the end! Remember those past 40 years—do not forget them, I pray you. If you have an old friend whom you have tried and tested for a long period, if you are a wise man, you will grapple him to your soul with hooks of steel and, as to your God in Heaven, who has been with you all these years and kept you from childhood, even until now, you will say, “I cannot doubt Him! I cannot look elsewhere for a leader. I remember the God who has led me through the wilderness these 40 years.”

Again, according to the text, *all the way that God had led His people was worth remembering*—"And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you." "All the way." It is always a pity to look at things only in parts. If we would see them aright, we must examine them as a whole. Sometimes it is our lack of dealing with things as a whole that leads us to make mistakes. "All things work together for good to them that love God." Not this thing, that thing and the other thing, by themselves, but *all things put together* work together for good. Now, remember, "*all the way*" whereby the Lord has led you. I know you remember the day when God led you by that grave, where half your heart and all your joy seemed buried—you went to see it, the other day, in the cemetery. Now you remember that part of the way—but the exhortation is to remember, "all the way," whereby the Lord has led you. Put this and that together, and you will have something more to remember than that one grave and that dark day when they said that everything was lost—when your household goods were sold and you were left penniless. Yes, and the Lord led you through even that trial! You must remember all the way He led you—how He helped you and brought you through that dark day into the light again—"Remember all the way which the Lord your God led you."

I would desire, tonight, to think of all the loving kindness of God. I think it is worth while to remember those rough bits of road, for we are to remember all the way, but remember, also, those beautiful walks by the river of the Water of Life and those happy climbs to the top of Mount Clear. Yes, you may remember Giant Despair's Castle and By-Path Meadow, to sorrow over them, but then *God* did not lead you there! You had better remember the Interpreter's House and the Delectable Mountains where He did lead you, for where He led you all was well! As to where you went of your own accord, the only leadings that you can remember with joy were those in which He led you back with weeping and supplication, till you were almost glad to kiss every flint that cut your feet, so long as you really felt that you were back in the old road, again, for there you loved to be, and anywhere else you knew you were in great danger! Let us sing of mercy and of judgement! Unto You, O God, will we sing with mingled strains! We will run up the scale to the highest notes of a joyous Hallelujah and every note shall be for You! But we will go down to the deepest tones as well, and still, every note shall be unto You, O God! "Remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness."

Observe this one thing more, dear Friends, *that the children of Israel were commanded to remember the Lord's leading*, and I do not, this evening, merely *invite* you to remember all the way that the Lord has led you, but, as my text puts it as a command, so I give it to you as a command from God! There is a, "you shall" to it and, therefore, I leave my text in your hands, not to be accepted or rejected at your option, but as a positive *command* binding upon every man, woman, or child who has been led of God. If you are, indeed, the sheep of His pasture, this command comes to you with all the force of Divine authority!

II. Now, in the second place, I ask you to think upon THE OBJECTIVES OF THAT LEADING THROUGH THE WILDERNESS—"To humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His Commandments, or no."

God has led you and the time—the 40 years. The place—the wilderness. And the method of His leading have all co-operated to erect two purposes.

First of all, *to humble you*. In the review of your life of mercy, do you not feel humbled? I think that there is everything about it to make us all feel humble.

The first thing to humble us is the remembrance that we have, all along, been receiving gifts. That is always a humbling experience. We like better to give than to receive. There is great pride about giving, but all this while, as far as God is concerned, we have been what one called, "gentlemen commoners upon the Lord's bounty." We have been pensioners at His gate, we have been beggars at His door and the only garments that we could put on and call our own are the garments of a beggar. We have been allowed to beg and we have always had alms given to us according to our faith. That ought to humble us. We have not earned a penny, but have been always living on charity. We have been supported on Divine alms all this while.

I will tell you what often humbles me. If I attempt any work for God and I do not succeed at it, I am disappointed, but I make up my mind to try again. But if I succeed, then do I not begin to boast? Certainly not! Have you ever noticed what Peter did when he went fishing and got his boat full? The boat began to go down as soon as it was loaded with fish—and so did Peter till he went down so low that he cried out to Jesus, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" He felt that he was not worthy to have Christ in the same boat with him! The more God blesses you, if you are a man of God, the humbler you will be. It is His mercies, His favors, His loving kindnesses that will tend to humble you, and make you say with Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which You have shown unto Your servant." God humbles some of His people with favor and love. Others, who may not be humbled that way, have to be brought low in another manner.

Now, in looking back, do not your prayers humble you? Is there one prayer you have prayed of which you dare to be proud? Do not your sweetest communings with God humble you? In hearing of Him by the hearing of the ear, you may not be humbled, but when your eyes see Him, you lie low, with Job, and abhor yourself and repent in dust and ashes. Are you not humbled at the recollection of what you have not done, your sins of omission? How many they have been! Are you not humbled at the thought of the many other people's sins, as well as your own, that are laid to your charge—sins that grew out of your example, or that were not rebuked as they ought to have been—so that you became, by your negligence, a partaker in them? Ah, dear Sirs, if we have anything of which we think we could glory for a *moment*, it must be because we have forgotten all those 40 years in the wilderness, for there is a crowd of memories that will come before the mind of any thoughtful man to humble him!

The point that humbles one most is to think that we should need all this humbling, that God should have to put us in a wilderness for 40 years to humble us! What proud wretches we must be—pride must be ingrained in us if we need all this discipline to get it out! The children of Israel were proud and when I mention the ways in which *they* manifested their pride, I think that I shall only be holding the mirror up to ourselves. They were proud because they murmured. As soon as they began to be a little thirsty or hungry, they complained—and what was that murmuring but a proof of their pride? “I am such a very great person that I ought not to suffer hunger! I am such an important individual that I ought not to endure thirst!” That was part of the Israelites’ pride. And then they began to doubt God. They had scarcely heard the last rattle of the chariots of the Egyptians when they said to Moses, “Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness?” They pretended that they knew better than God! And unbelief is only a kind of veiled pride in which we begin to set up our own judgment against the wisdom of God. They were also very proud because they were so hot and fiery—and passionate and eager. Moses had only been gone from them 40 days when they said to Aaron, “Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him.” So they must have a god of their own making, a molten calf, to take the place of Jehovah who had delivered them from the hand of Pharaoh! If God waited, they could not wait—not they! All this was the effect of pride.

Now, do you not find murmuring, unbelief and a wicked impetuosity still clinging to you? Well then, that is what God is trying to get out of you. All the experience of the 40 years in the wilderness has been meant to humble us and if it does not humble us, what is to become of us? If our experience of God’s love and of our own frailty does not lay us in the dust, what must we be? O God, by Your blessed Spirit, cause all these experiences to be effectual that we may be really humble before You! Yet I am afraid, that, if the Lord does not work another miracle, we shall still get more proud, for we are very apt, as we grow in years, to think, “Well now, I am an experienced person. I shall not fall like those silly boys.” The man who talks like that is the very man who does fall! I have often had to tell you that, in Scripture, you have scarcely an instance of a young Believer falling into sin, but nearly all the cases of backsliding recorded are those of old men and, “old fools are the worst fools.” We who are getting on in years and have had a long experience are just the kind of stone that the devil likes to carve into monuments of our own folly! Do not, therefore, think that because any of you know more than you did, and are walking nearer to God than you used to, there is anything for you to glory in! No, the distinct tendency of all this should be, by Divine Grace, to make us more cautious, more timorous, more trembling, more fearful of ourselves and, at the same time, more confident in God, more humble and, therefore, more believing, for I think that until self-confidence is emptied out of us, there is no room for confidence in God. Pride is the enemy of faith and

humility is the brother of true assurance. God bless, then, all our wilderness experience to our humbling!

The second objective of the Lord's leading appears to be, according to our text, *to prove us*. Does not the Lord know us? Yes, He does, but He still wants to know us, in another sense, by actual tests. God has given us these 40 years in the wilderness on purpose to *test us*. Will Richardson, a friend of mine, an old farm laborer in Essex, said to me, once, "Do you know, Sir, all through the winter I am thinking that when the hay-time comes, I will earn a good lump of money at hay-making. I am thinking about how well I will use my scythe and make a long day's work. And then I think I will reap many an acre when it gets to harvest-time. But," he added, "I have not been in the field above half-an-hour before my poor old back aches and I begin to find that Will cannot do much, now that he is getting on to eighty-six." He said, "It is wonderful what strength I have when there is not any grass to cut and when there is no corn to get in." So is it with many of us—we have a lot of faith till the trouble comes—and God, therefore, leads us, again, into the wilderness, and leaves us there, just to prove us and to show us that we are not the rich people, the great people and the believing people that we fancied we were! Thus the Lord tests us and, in the testing, 99 parts out of a hundred evaporate, perhaps 999 parts out of a thousand vanish away, and we have to bless God if there is even a thousandth part left of what we thought we had!

Well, Brothers and Sisters, beside this testing of our faith, and our love, and our graces, of which I have not time to speak, the Lord also leads us through the wilderness in order to point out to us something of the mischief that lurks within our nature. We have no idea what bad folk we are. I do not think there are any men or women here who have the slightest idea of what evil they may be capable of if they are only put under certain conditions and the Grace of God is taken away from them! Blasphemies, murders and foul lusts still lurk within that old mind of the flesh that abides even in the nature of the regenerate! And if those vile dogs once get loose, oh, Sirs, they will bite like the dog of the most unrenewed man! Every now and then, even we who are God's children find out what we can do, what we can say, and what we can feel. Oh, I wish we would believe in the sanctifying power of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit—and have no confidence in self at all—but cry for its mortification, its death and its burial with Christ, for that is the only thing to be done with it! While there is any life in the old flesh, the flesh is still flesh and none of us can tell what evil it will work if it once gets the opportunity! God leads us through the wilderness that we may discover this.

And, once more, I'm sure that the Lord also leads us through the wilderness as He led Israel, that He may see whether we really will keep His Commandments, or not. Yes, you have behaved well as an apprentice, so the Lord lets you become a journeyman. You have done well as a journeyman, but yet you may fail when you come to be a master. There was a young man who attended this House of Prayer regularly. He was much persecuted by his father and mother, but all the while he seemed wonderfully earnest. His parents are dead and he is his own master and the pos-

essor of a good deal of wealth but, alas, I do not think he ever goes to the House of God, now, or has any care about it. I have often noticed that persons, downtrodden and oppressed, will hold on to Christ—but when they get their liberty, they will run away from Him! It is an amazing thing, but it is true.

Some seem to change their religion with their coats. When their coat is half-worn out, they do not mind mixing up with all classes of people that worship God. But when they wear respectable broadcloth and especially when Her Ladyship puts on satin, then they want to go somewhere else. Now, the Lord leads people about, up high and down low, to see whether they will keep His Commandments, for that religion that will not stand the test of all weathers is worth nothing! If we do not so love God that whether He puts a hedge about us, or whether He permits Satan to break through the hedge and take away all that we have—if we do not still cling to Him, fair or foul—we do not love Him at all! And to separate between the precious and the vile is often the reason of the working of the hand of the God of Providence towards professors of religion. O God, help us to know ourselves and to know You—and make us right towards You!

I have not spoken much directly to unconverted people, tonight, yet my subject has all been for them as well as for the Lord's people. I should like them to look back over the years in which they have lived without God, yet God has not left them, altogether, and He has, tonight, brought them into this Tabernacle where there sounds forth a silver trumpet of which this is the note, "Turn unto Me and live! Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." May you, tonight, as you take a review of your past life, be moved to feel, "Surely, God must mean to bless me, or He would not have been so good to me!"

I was speaking with an officer who rode in the charge at Balaclava, one of the very few who came out alive, and, though I had not seen him before, I could not help putting my hand on his shoulder and saying to him, "Surely, the rest of your life, so strangely spared, must be dedicated to God." It may be that you have been in a shipwreck and that you barely escaped. Or you were in a terrible collision on the railway. Possibly you have had typhoid fever. It may be that you were laid low the last time the cholera was raging here, or you have been kicked by a horse, or you have escaped from all sorts of tragedies—yet here you are. Should not the life which has been so specially spared be dedicated to God? We read of John Bunyan, that in his godless days he was foolhardy to the last degree, and once, when a serpent came in his way, he took it up and plucked out the poison gland from it. It was a wonder that he was not stung, but he was not—and the reason was that God meant him to write *The Pilgrim's Progress*—and he could not die till he had done that.

And I believe that the Lord has some design of love towards some of you who are here, tonight. Go and seek His face and cry to Him for mercy and He will grant it to you tonight! We prayed that all who came in here might

be saved. I trust they will be. I believe they will be. What a joyous thing it would be for all of us to be bound for Glory! Let us begin to praise the Lord's name that all of us are to go to Heaven in answer to that prayer! Well, as you are going there, you had better begin to learn something about it and get ready for it—and I invite you to do so. Let us begin the music of Heaven by singing this one verse—

***“All hail the power of Jesus’ name,
Let angels prostrate fall!
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.”***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 139:1-18.**

Verse 1. *O LORD, You have searched me, and known me.* “You have explored me, as men dig in mines and make subterranean excavations. You have searched into my secret parts and known me.”

2. *You knew my sitting down and my raising up.* “My simplest acts, those which I scarcely premeditated.”

2. *You understand my thoughts afar off.* “Before I think it, when I think it, and when I forget it, You understand my every thought.”

3. *You compass my path and my lying down.* “Making a ring around me, so that I am entirely under Your observation. My roving and my resting are both known to You.”

3. *And are acquainted with all my ways.* “My habits, and the exceptions from my habits, are all known to You.”

4. *For there is not a word on my tongue, but, You, O LORD, You knew it altogether.* “When it is on my tongue, and not spoken, like a seed sown, hidden away, not yet sprouted, You, O Jehovah, knew it altogether!”

5. *You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me.* “I am like a prisoner, with guards before me and behind me, and the officer's hand upon my shoulder all the while. You have arrested me, O Lord. I can never get away from You.”

6. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain up to it.* “I believe it, but I cannot understand it; even my imagination cannot picture it to me.”

7. *Where shall I go from Your Spirit?* “If I want to do so. If I desire to avoid You, where can I go to escape from Your Omnipresent Spirit?”

7, 8. *Or where shall I flee from Your Presence? I ascend up into Heaven, You are there.* The true glory of that bright world.

8. *If I make my bed in Hell, behold, You are there.* “The terror of that place of woe, in the land of death-shadow and darkness, You are living, whoever else is dead. If I make my abode in Hades, in Hell, You are there.”

9, 10. *If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Your hand lead me.* “If the breath of the morning breeze should bear me far away across the pathless sea, You are there before me. If I ride upon a flash of light, You are swifter than the sunbeam—even there shall Your hand lead me.” The lone missionary in the

furthest parts of the earth is led by God. When he knows not his way, God leads him, and when he has no companion to cheer him, God's hands uphold him. What a comfort to any of you who have to journey far away from your kindred! You cannot be alone, for God is there! Be of good comfort and go as bravely as if you walked the crowded streets of this great city!

10-12. *And Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darknesses cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yes, the darkness hides not from You, but the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both right to You.* It is impossible to conceive that God should need the light in order to see. He can see as well in the midnight shades as in the blaze of noon. Let no man think that he may sin in secret because he is not seen of the eyes of man—God's eyes are on him in the dark as much as in the light.

13, 14. *For You have possessed my reins: You have covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are Your works; and that my soul knows right well.* He was no Agnostic, he never dreamed of being a know-nothing.

15-17. *My substance was not hid from You, when I was made in secret, and curiously worked in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in Your book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!* How sweet to be thought of by God! How charming and how cheering to be the perpetual object of the Lord's thoughts! The Psalmist does not tell us how precious are God's thoughts, but he sets a note of admiration to them—"How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God!" He does not try to calculate the total of their value, but he says, "How great is the sum of them!"

18. *If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with You.* "You have thought of me when I was asleep—and when I wake, I think of You." Happy living, happy dying, to feel that, if we never wake again on earth, we shall wake up with God! How precious it is to think that when good and useful men fall asleep, when they awake, they are forever with the Lord! Our turn will come soon, my Brothers and Sisters. May it be our portion to die in harness and to be taken away while yet we have the Light of God's sustenance resting upon our work!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—214, 139 (SONG I), 1035.

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LIVING ON THE WORD

NO. 2577

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 3, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 15, 1883.**

***“Man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds
out of the mouth of the LORD does man live.”
Deuteronomy 8:3.***

THE main thing for every one of us is life. What would it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own life? Of what use would riches be if life were gone? What is the value of broad acres to a dead man, or the applause of nations to one who lies in his sepulcher? The first thing, therefore, that a man is to look to, is life. There are some persons who take this Truth of God in a wrong sense and so make mischief of it. They say, “We must live,” whereas, in the sense in which they mean it, there is no such necessity at all! That we must continue to live here is not at all clear—it were better far for us to die than to live by sinning. Martyrs have preferred to suffer most fearful deaths rather than, even by a word, to bring disgrace upon the name of Christ. And every true Christian would prefer immediate death rather than dishonor his great Lord. and Master.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, according to our common notion, if we must live, we must eat. We must eat bread which is the staff of life and, sometimes, when bread is scarce and hunger sets up its sharp pangs, men have been driven to put forth their hand unto iniquity to provide themselves with necessary food. You remember how our Divine Lord, who is our perfect Exemplar in all things, acted when He was in this situation? When He had fasted in the wilderness 40 days and 40 nights, He hungered and then the Evil One came to Him and said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones be turned into bread.” This was, in effect, saying, “Leave off trusting in Your Heavenly Father. He has evidently deserted You—He has left You in the wilderness among the wild beasts and though He feeds *them*, He has not fed You! He has left You to starve—therefore, help Yourself—exercise Your own power! Though You have put it under God’s keeping and, being here on earth, You have become Your Father’s Servant, yet steal a little of Your service from Your Father and use it on Your own behalf. Take some of that power which You have devoted to His great work and employ it for Your own comfort. Leave off trusting in Your Father—command these stones to be made

bread.” At once this text flashed forth, as the Master drew it out, like a sword from its scabbard—“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” It was only by the use of this “sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God,” that the arch-enemy was driven off from Christ! And I want to use that weapon now. I may say of it what David said of the sword of Goliath, “There is none like that; give it me.” That sword, with which Christ won the victory, is the best one for His servants to employ!

This answer of our Lord to the tempter teaches us that the sustenance of our life, although naturally and according to the ordinary appearance of things depends upon bread, yet really depends upon God! It is God who gives the bread the power to nourish the man. To me, it seems a great mystery that bread, or any other kind of food, should do this. I can understand how, being matter in a certain form, it tends to build up the material structure of the body, albeit that the process is a very amazing one by which bread turns into flesh, blood, bone, muscle, hair and all sorts of things, by a perpetual working of the Power of God. But it is more remarkable, still, that this material should seem, at any rate, to some extent, to nourish man’s *heart*, so that the very soul and the living principle within him should be dependent upon its being sustained by the food of the body! Can any of us tell how it is that the inner spirit sets in motion the muscles of the hand and the nerves that communicate with the brain? How is it that the impalpable spirit—a thing which you cannot see or hear, which is not, itself, at all material—yet possesses powers by which it controls the materialism of this outward body? And how is it that the material substance in bread somehow works to the keeping of our spirit in connection with this flesh and blood? I cannot explain this mystery, but I believe it to be a continual miracle worked by God. I am frequently told that miracles have ceased. It seems to me that miracles are the rule of God’s working and that, everywhere, things of marvel and of wonder are to be perceived if we will only look below the outward appearance! Dig for a while beneath the mere surface and we shall see—

“A world of wonders: I can say no less.”

According to our text, we are called upon to observe that the power which keeps us alive is not in the bread, itself, but in God, who chooses to make use of the bread as His agent in nourishing our frame. I do not infer from this Truth of God that, therefore, I ought never to eat, but to live by faith because God can make me live without bread. Some people seem to me to be very unwise when they infer that because God can heal me, therefore I am never to take fit and proper medicine for a disease because I am to trust in God. I do trust in God, but I trust in God in God’s own way—and His way of procedure is this—if I wish to satisfy hunger, I must ordinarily eat bread. If I wish to be cured of any malady, I must take the remedy He has provided. That is His general rule of working, but still, it would be an equally grievous error and would show another form of folly if we were to say that it is the bread or the medicine that does the

work! It is the bread that feeds, it is the medicine that heals—but it is God who works by these means, or, if He pleases—who works without them! If it were necessary that His child should live and He did not choose to put ravens into commission to bring him bread and meat, or if He did not command a widow to sustain His servant, yet He could support him without any means, for, “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” When the Lord speaks and bids him live, he lives! God spoke the world into existence—His Word still keeps the whole fabric of the universe upon its pillars and, surely, that Word is able to sustain our soul in life even without the use of outward means, or by means as long as God pleases.

That, I think, is the meaning of the text. God took His people into the wilderness where there was no sowing, no reaping, no making bread—and they seemed as if they must be famished there. But, then, God made the manna drop from Heaven, to show that if not by one means, yet by another, He could sustain them. He took them where there were no rippling brooks or gentle purling streams of water, but His servant struck the flinty rock and the water came forth to show that God could give men drink, not only from the fountains of the deep, below, or by rain from the clouds above, but from the solid rocks if He so pleased! God can give you bread to eat, my Friend. Though not perhaps in the way you hope, it may come in a fashion of which you have never even dreamed! I have read of one who was condemned to be starved to death and, as the judge pronounced the sentence, he said to him, “And what can your God do for you, now?” The man replied, “My God can do this for me—if He pleases, He can feed me from your table.” And so it happened, though the judge never knew it, for his own wife sent food to the poor man and kept him alive until, at last, he regained his liberty! God has a way of using most unlikely instruments to effect His purpose. He can, if He pleases, make the waters stand upright as a heap until the chosen nation has passed through the midst of the sea. Or He can permit the fire to blaze around His people and yet keep them from being burned, as Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego came forth unharmed from Nebuchadnezzar’s burning fiery furnace—and not even the smell of fire had passed upon them!

I now come to the more spiritual meaning of the text and I pray God to make it to be rich food for your souls. I ask you to notice, first, *the Word*. “Every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.” Secondly, consider *the use we are to make of the Word*. We are to live upon it! And then, thirdly, note *the adaptation of that Word to our use*—every word of it, for, according to the text, we do not live upon some words that come out of God’s mouth, “but by *every* word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live.”

I. First, then, let us think a little about THE WORD OF THE LORD.

What do we mean by the expression, “the Word of God”? God deigns to use figures of speech such as we can understand, for we are like little children who have to learn by pictures. Now, with regard to a man, his word is often the expression of his wish. He desires such-and-such a

thing to be done and he says to his servant, "Do this," or to another, "Come here," or, "Go there." His word is the expression of his wish. Alas, with us, our wishes are often strong and our words are feeble! We order such-and-such a thing to be done, but it is not done. We have, perhaps, a thousand wishes in our hearts which, if we were to utter them, would be to make ourselves appear ridiculous! We may wish to do this and that, but if we were to say, "Let these things be done," they would not be done in spite of all our saying, for, often, where the word of a man is, there is weakness. It is only where the Word of God is that there is power! Speaking after the manner of men, when God wills a thing, He says, "Let it be," and it is immediately! Power goes forth from God with His will. He said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God said, "Let the waters under the Heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear. And it was so." God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth: and it was so." He has but to will anything and it comes to pass! His Word is His will in motion, His power put into action—that is the common and emphatic sense of the term.

God's Word is also *the expression of His Truth*. A man says to us, "I promise you so-and-so," and we say to him, "We rely upon your word." A man's honor is involved in his word. He who does not keep his word is not a man of honor and he soon falls, very naturally and very properly, into disgrace with his fellows. Men will not trust one whose word is not reliable. Alas, the words of men are not only feeble, but they are often fickle and false! But the Word of God is the promise of One who knows what He is saying, who is able to perform what He promises and who will never change nor ever be untrue. So that, if we look at His Word as being the expression of His Truth, we see His faithfulness. And upon these two—the power that can keep the promise, and the will which is faithful to keep it—we may rest with joy and confidence.

Again, if a man is a true man, his word is a *revelation of himself*. One of the ancients said of a very beautiful boy or young man, when he had looked at him, "Speak, boy, for then I can see you." And we often see a great deal more of a person's character when he speaks than when we simply look at him. There is many a pretty face that has been admired because of its appearance, but when its owner's not very pretty tongue has begun to chatter, love has been almost driven to its wits' end to find any cause for admiration! There are some people who talk in such a way that when we see their inner selves, they appear as unlovely as their outer selves seem to be comely. But a true man reveals himself by his words. Hence it is that the Lord Jesus Christ is called, "The Word of God." Jesus Christ is God speaking. God thinks what He says, and the thoughts of God are embodied in the Person, work, life and death of Jesus Christ, His dear Son. With all reverence, we say that God never could have revealed Himself so fully in any other way than by giving "His only-

begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Well did Dr. Watts sing—

***“Nature with open volume stands,
To spread her Maker’s praise abroad.
And every labor of his hands
Shows something worthy of a God.
But in the Grace that rescued man
His brightest form of Glory shines
Here on the Cross, ‘tis fairest drawn
In precious blood and crimson lines.
Here I behold His inmost heart,
Where Grace and vengeance strangely join
Piercing His Son with sharpest smart,
To make the purchased pleasures mine.”***

So, you see, dear Friends, the expression, “the Word of God,” has a very wide range. But my text bids me remind you of something very sweet—“Man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live.” It is beautiful to think of the Scripture as *proceeding out of the mouth of God*. Do not look upon that scroll of parchment on which it is written and over which the critics quibble and quarrel. They stumble at almost every letter and word of it and so miss its meaning and spirit, but, as for you, pray the Holy Spirit to speak it into your heart as coming immediately from the mouth of God! When Cowper looked up at his mother’s portrait, after, to his great sorrow, she had long been gone from earth, he cried—

“O that those lips had language!”

Well, you are to regard this Word of God as constantly coming forth fresh from His lips. The Holy Spirit puts into the Word a power which makes it go right into your heart with the very tone and majesty of the God of Grace, the Father of your spirit! This manna falls ever fresh from Heaven. The Israelites never had stale bread in the wilderness. They gathered the “angels’ food” new every morning, just as it came down from the skies. In the same way, take every passage of God’s Word as coming to you fresh from God. Regard it as your Heavenly Father speaking it straight to your heart!

I was reading, one day, in one of Mark Guy Pearse’s books, a pretty thought that I had never noticed before. He puts into the mouth of a very simple but godly man, who is talking about his Heavenly Father, words something after this fashion—“I am quite sure my Father will take care of me. He never rested during the six days of creation till He had fitted up a place for His child to come and live in. Until He had put the finishing stroke on it and got the house all ready for Adam, He would not rest at all. And now my Heavenly Father will not rest until He has made Heaven ready for me—and made me ready for Heaven—and all that I need on the way, He will surely give me.” When I read that, it came just as fresh to me as if I had seen the second Chapter of the Book of Genesis written! It did not look to me like an old, stale record, but a fresh and living message proceeding out of the mouth of God—then and there! And there is many a dear child of God who, taught of the Spirit, has given new read-

ings to old texts and, as it were, hung the old oil paintings in a better light, till we have said, as we have looked at them, “Can they be the same pictures? They seem to have fresh beauty and fresh force put into them!” This is what you are to feed upon, dear children of God—His own Word, as you have it here. But you must feed upon it as continually coming forth out of His very mouth.

The text further says, “*by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live.*” Don’t you be at all disturbed, dear Friends, concerning the Doctrine of Inspiration, as to how the Bible is Inspired, whether by this process, or by that. I do not much mind how it is—I know that it is Inspired and that is enough for me—and I believe that it is *verbally* Inspired. I find the Apostle Paul hanging a weighty argument upon the use of a singular or a plural, where he says, “He says not, And to seeds, as of many but as of one, And to your *Seed*, which is Christ.” I find the Apostle Peter dwelling upon a word spoken by a woman and making it teach an important lesson—“Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him, lord,” and so forth. And, you remember that, not long ago, we had the text, “And it shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me Ishi; and shall call Me no more Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name,” in which a great Truth of God was involved in the use of two words that were somewhat similar in meaning. [See Sermon #2571, Volume 44—*The Climax of God’s Love*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .]

I do not say that either of our English versions is Inspired, for there are mistakes in the translation, but if we could get at the original text, just as it was first written, I am not afraid to say that every jot or tittle—every crossed “t” of it and every dot of each “i”—was Infallibly Inspired by God the Holy Spirit! I believe in the Infallibility and the Infinity of Holy Scripture! God Inspired the whole record, Genesis as well as Revelation, and all that is between—and He desires us to believe in one part of the Word as much as another. If you do not believe that, it will not be food to you. I am sure that it will not—it will only be a kind of emetic to you and not food. It cannot feed your soul as long as you are disputing about it. If it is not God’s Word, then it is man’s word, or the devil’s word—and if you care to live on the devil’s word, or on man’s word, I do not! But God’s Word is food for the soul that dwells with God and it cannot be satisfied with anything else.

II. Now let us pass on to our second point which is THE USE WE ARE TO MAKE OF GOD’S WORD. We are to live on it.

I was sitting, one day, in the New Forest, under a beech tree. I like to look at the beech and study it, as I do many other trees, for every tree has its own peculiarities and habits, its special ways of twisting its boughs and growing its bark, and opening its leaves and so forth. As I looked up at that beech and admired the wisdom of God in making it, I saw a squirrel running round and round the trunk and up the branches, and I thought to myself, “Ah, this beech tree is a great deal more to you

than it is to me, for it is your home, your living, your all.” Its big branches were the main streets of his city and its little boughs were the lanes. Somewhere in that tree he had his house and the beech mast was his daily food—he lived on it. Well now, the way to deal with God’s Word is not merely to contemplate it, or to study it, as a student does, but to live on it as that squirrel lives on his beech tree! Let it be to you, *spiritually*, your house, your home, your food, your medicine, your clothing—the one essential element of your soul’s life and growth.

There are some whom I know who take God’s Word and play with it. They are interested in its narratives—they study its histories in the light of modern research—and so on. But it was not meant merely for such a purpose as that. Loaves of bread are not put on the table for you to carve them into different shapes simply to look at—they are intended to be eaten. That is the proper use for bread and that is the proper use for God’s Word!

Some do even worse than this—they do not so much play with the Bible as fight over it—they contend fiercely for a Doctrine and condemn everybody who cannot accept their particular interpretation of it! I think that I have heard preachers who have seemed to me to bring out a Doctrine on purpose to fight over it. I have a dog that has a rug in which he sleeps and when I go home, tonight, he will bring it out and shake it before me—not that he particularly cares for his rug, but because he knows that I shall say, “I’ll have it,” and then he will bark at me and, in his language say, “No, you won’t.” There are some people who fetch out the Doctrines of Grace just in that way! I can see them trotting along with the Doctrine of Election just in order that some Arminian may dispute with them about it and that they may then bark at him! Do not act so, Beloved! The worst implement with which you can knock a man down is the Bible! It is intended for us to live upon—not to be the weapon of our controversies—but our daily food upon which we rejoice to live.

I do not think that our Bibles were given to us that we might merely employ them as telescopes to peer into the heavens, to try to find out what is going to happen in 50 years’ time. I am weary with the prophecies and speculations that, as a general rule, end in nothing! I know some brethren with whom one cannot talk about any passage but they say, “Oh, you have not seen the last little book of R. B. S. (those are not the real initials of the good Brother), in which he says that this passage does not apply to us, it is meant only for the Jews.” Or else, “That was only for the Church in the wilderness, and not for us in these days.” Let us not so misuse the Word of God, but prize it as the bread upon which we are to live! “Man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live.”

“But how can we live on words?” asks one. You have spoken well. We cannot live on words if they are the words of men. But there is nothing like the Word of God to live upon! To that Word we owe our life. He spoke us into being, He spoke the soul into our body. By that Word of God we

are daily kept alive—let God but reverse it and say, “Return, you children of men”—and we must at once go back to the dust from where we came.

Certainly, it is by God’s Word that we began to live *spiritually*—we believed on Christ through the effectual working of His Word. The living and incorruptible Seed was sown in our heart and by it we began to live. And it is by that same Word that our soul has been sustained in life. Up to this moment you and I have received no nutriment from the Holy Spirit except by that Word of God which is the food of the spiritual Israel in the wilderness of this world. Christ said, “My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed.” And it is by Him, as the Word of God, that our life is yet further to grow. There is no development of the Christian that will come to him in any way but by God’s Word—Incarnate or Inspired. He who spoke us into being must speak us into yet stronger being! Faith is God’s gift, but so is assurance. The very first spark of life is the gift of God’s Grace, but so is the seraphic flame of zeal. That all comes from God’s Word and when we are about to enter Heaven, the last touch that shall perfect us will be given by no engraving tool, but the Word of God! Our Lord prayed for His disciples, “Sanctify them through Your Truth; Your Word is Truth.” And that Word shall complete the entire process! See, then, Beloved, on what your inmost spirit must live—God’s holy Word!

Brothers and Sisters, may I ask you whether you are all sufficiently aware of this great Truth of God? You never received spiritual life by your own feelings. It was when you believed God’s Word that you lived! And you will never get an increase of spiritual life and grow in Grace by your own feelings or your own doings. It must still be by your believing the promises and feeding on the Word! There is no other food for your souls—all else, in the end, will prove but husks. Therefore, are you hungry? Come and feed upon the Word! Have you backslidden? Come and feed again upon the Word! God heals His people by feeding them. “How so?” you ask. When the church at Laodicea was neither cold nor hot, so that Christ felt that He must spew her out of His mouth, yet even then He said to the angel of that church, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me.” I am bold to say, “There is no cure for lukewarmness like a good supper with Christ!” If He enters in and sups with you, and you with Him, your lukewarmness will disappear at once! Do not begin to be saved by faith and then go on to be saved by works—do not try to mix the two! If you are of the house of Sarah, do not bow your knee before Hagar and go back to the bondwoman. If you have lived on the pure, simple Word, crediting it by a living, God-given faith, go on to live in the same way and grow by the Word. Feed thereon continually, that you may be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.”

III. Now I come to my last point, which I want to insist upon very urgently, and that is THE ADAPTATION OF THE WORD OF GOD FOR THE

FEEDING of our souls. "By every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live."

"By every word." If you restrict yourselves in your food to one or two articles, every physician will tell you that there is a danger that your body may not be supplied with every form of nutriment that it requires. A good wide range of diet is recommended to those who would have vigorous health. And in spiritual things, if you keep to one part of God's Word, you may live on it, but the tendency will be for you not to attain to complete spiritual health through the lack of some nutriment with which the Word would have supplied you had you used it all. Every Word of God is that upon which man lives in the highest and healthiest state.

Look, for instance, at *the Doctrine* in the Word of God. "I do not like doctrine," says one. Do you know what you are saying? You are a disciple, yet you do not like teaching, for doctrine means teaching. For a disciple to say that he does not like to be taught, is as good as to say that he does not like to be a disciple and, in fact, that he is not one in the true meaning of that term. Whatever Truth is laid down in God's Word, it is important for us to know it.

"Oh," says one, "but there are some Truths of God that are not important." I do not know of any. In places where they cut diamonds, they sweep up the dust because the very dust of diamonds is valuable. And in the Word of God, all the Truth is so precious that the very tiniest Truth, if there is such a thing, is still diamond dust and is unspeakably precious! "But," you object, "I do not see that such a Truth would be of any practical use." You may not see it, dear Friend, but it is so. If I could write out my experience as Pastor of this Church, I could show that there have been persons converted to God by Doctrines that some might have thought unlikely to produce that result. I have known the Doctrine of the Resurrection to bring sinners to Christ. I have known scores brought to the Savior by the Doctrine of Election—the very sort of people who, as far as I can see, would never have come if that Truth of God had not happened to be an angular Doctrine that just struck their heart in the right place and fitted into the crevices of their nature. I believe that everything that is in God's Word ought to be preached, ought to be believed and ought to be studied by us! Every Doctrine is profitable for some end or other. If it is not food, it is medicine, and children sometimes need a tonic as much as they need milk. Every plant in God's garden answers some good purpose, so let us cultivate them all, and not neglect any Doctrine.

Yet, when I come to God's Word, I find that it is not all Doctrine, and I discover much of *precept*. Now, perhaps a man says, "I do not care about precepts." We used to have a set of Christian people, so-called, who, if you preached about any duty of a Believer, said at once, "We cannot bear the word, 'duty.' It has a legal sound in it." I remember saying to one who called me "a legal preacher," "That is all right. 'Legal' means, lawful, and you mean, I suppose, that I am a lawful preacher, and that you are an unlawful person to object to my preaching!" But so it used to be, if you

preached good sound Doctrine, if you preached on the privileges of Believers, then they were as pleased as possible. But when you once began to talk about the practical parts of God's Word, then straightway they were offended. No wonder, for their conscience pricked them for their neglect of those portions of the Scriptures! But, dear Friends, we live upon the precepts as well as upon the Doctrines and they have become to us as our necessary food. You know how David said of the Lord's Commandments, "More to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter, also, than honey, and the honeycomb; moreover by them is Your servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."

Blessed be God, there is also a large portion of this Book that is taken up with *promises*. Dear Friends, be well acquainted with the promises! I have often found it profitable to consult that little book in which Dr. Samuel Clarke has arranged the promises of Scripture under different heads. It is very helpful, when you are in trouble, to refer to all the promises which are given to those who are in similar circumstances to yours. For instance, to the sick, or to those in poverty, or those suffering from slander. As you read them over, one after the other, you say to yourselves, "This is my checkbook—I can take out the promises as I need them, sign them by faith, present them at the great Bank of Grace—and come away enriched with present help in time of need." That is the way to use God's promises, so that they shall minister to the life of our spirit.

But, dear Friends, much of God's Word is taken up with *histories*. Here you have the story of the Creation and of the Fall, of Abraham and of Isaac, of Jacob, of Moses, and of the kings and princes and people of Israel. You ask, perhaps, "Is this food?" Certainly! There are critics, nowadays, who speak very slightly of the Old Testament and talk as if the Gospels comprised the whole of God's Word. Even the Epistles are reckoned to be of inferior quality. But this is all wrong! It is by every Word of God that man lives and, often, a history, giving us an example of faith, or a proof of God's faithfulness in helping His tried people, becomes more suitable food than the promise, by itself, might be! There is more force, men say, in the concrete, than there is in the abstract. Certainly there is more power in a thing put into actual life than there is in that same thing merely stated in words. If ever you go to the picture galleries of Versailles, you may walk through—I was about to say miles of galleries, among portraits of kings and notable men of different ages—but you do not see anybody stopping to look at them! And neither do you care to see them yourself. They are just portraits, but, downstairs there are paintings of the same men, only they are pictured in battle array, or in various positions which show them in action. Now you stand and look at them, for you are interested in the representation of the scenes in which they lived. So, sometimes, God's promises hang up like pictures on the wall and we do not notice them. But when we see men who have trusted those promises and proved the truth of them, then there is a sort of human interest about them which wins our attention and speaks to our

hearts. Never neglect the historical parts of God's Word, for they are full of food to the children of God.

It is precisely the same with regard to *the prophecies*. I once heard Mr. George Muller say that he liked to read his Bible through, again and again, and he liked, especially to read those portions of the Bible which he did not understand. That seems rather an amazing thing to say, does it not? For what profit can come to us if we do not understand what we read? The good man put it to me like this. He said, "There is a little boy who is with his father and there is a good deal of what his father says that he comprehends and takes it in, and he is very pleased to hear his father talk. But sometimes his father speaks of things that are quite beyond him, yet the boy likes to listen—he learns a little, here and there, and, by-and-by, when he has listened year after year, he begins to understand what his father says as he never would have done if he had run away whenever his father began to talk beyond his comprehension." So is it with the prophecies and other deep parts of God's Word. If you read them once or twice, but do not comprehend them, still study them—give your heart to them, for, by-and-by, the precious Truth of God will permeate your spirit and you will insensibly drink wisdom which otherwise you never would have received!

Every part of the Word of God is food for the soul. So, dear Friends, it may be that there is a *threatening* message which speaks very sharply to you, but which is also most profitable for you. Perhaps some Sabbath you go out of the Tabernacle and you say, "Our Pastor has not comforted us this morning. He seems to have harrowed us and plowed us." Yes, I know that it is so, sometimes, but it is for your profit, for, as Hezekiah said, "by these things men live." It frequently happens that we need humbling, proving, testing and bringing down—and every right-minded child of God will say, "Do not let my training be according to my mind, but let it be according to God's mind." That sermon which pleases us most may not profit us at all—while the one which grieves and vexes us may, perhaps, be doing us a most essential service. When the Word of God searches you through and through, open your heart to it! Let the wind blow right through your whole being and carry away every rag and relic that ought to be taken from you.

There are some of God's Words that are very short, but they contain an abundance of food for the soul. I have sometimes stood still, as I have been looking at a text, and I have felt like Jonathan when he found the honey. I could not eat it all. I could only dip my rod into it and taste it. And I wanted to call you all up, to see if you could clear this forest which was so laden with sweetness. At other times, on my way home, when I have not got much, myself, during the sermon, the Master has given me a feast on the road, and I have laughed to myself, again and again, for very joy of heart over some precious passage out of which fresh light has broken to cheer my spirit and make me glad in the Lord! Oh, keep to the Word, my Brothers and Sisters! Keep to it as God's Word and as coming out of His mouth. Suck it down into your soul, you cannot have too

much of it! Feed on it day and night, for thus will God make you to live the life that is life, indeed!

If there is a poor soul here that needs to find eternal life, my dear Friend, I bid you seek it in God's Word and nowhere else. "I thought I would go home and pray," says one. Do so, but, at the same time, remember that your prayers are of little worth without God's Word. Hear God's Word, first, and then go and tell God your own word, for it is in His *Word of promise* rather than in your word of prayer that salvation is to be found! Remember that grand sentence in the Book of Exodus where God says, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." It is not said, "When *you* see the blood," but when I see it! So, when God looks upon Christ's shed and sprinkled blood, it is then that He looks on you with pity and compassion! Look where God looks and then your eyes will meet His! If you look to Christ, and God looks to Christ, then you shall see eye to eye, and you shall find joy and peace in believing. God the Father admires Christ. Poor soul, do you admire Him, too? Then there will be a point on which you will both be agreed. God the Father entrusts His honor and glory to Christ—trust your soul with Christ—for so you will be agreed. God grant that you may do so this very hour! Remember this one text as you go your way—"He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." God grant that every one of you may have that everlasting life, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—191, 711, 192.

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

BREAD FOR THE HUNGRY

NO. 418

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 10, 1861,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And He humbled you and suffered you to hunger and fed you with manna, which you knew not neither did your fathers know; that He might make you know that man does not live by bread only but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live.”
Deuteronomy 8:3.***

THIS notable text shall teach us two lessons this morning. Its first utterance shall be concerning Providence and its second, concerning the *life of grace in the heart*. Our blessed Lord once used this text with regard to Providence and therefore, we shall be justified in so interpreting it. When the foul fiend suggested to the hungry Savior that He should work a “preposterous miracle” to supply His needs, saying, “If you are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread,” the Master met him, not with the wooden sword of human reason, but with this true Jerusalem blade, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, replying to him, “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”

Our glorious David took this smooth and shining stone out of the clear and silvery brook of Scripture and threw it at Goliath’s head—an example to us to meet temptations with the weapons of Scripture—not with the words or traditions of men.

I. Let us for one moment, that we may get the meaning of this text, with regard to PROVIDENCE, reflect upon the children of Israel in the wilderness. They were an exceeding great host, numbering somewhere between two and three millions. They had come forth out of Egypt on a sudden. They were poor, they were not therefore in circumstances to provide themselves with food even for a long march, much less for forty years. They had each of them brought what provender they had, for we read, “They took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.”

They crossed the Red Sea by miracle. Very soon afterwards all their provisions must have been exhausted. Picture their position—the kneading troughs are empty, the sterile wilderness of Sinai can hardly yield blades of grass enough for their flocks. How could it provide them with any sustenance for themselves? They have a long journey before them and where have they to look? There is no possibility of commerce by which to purchase food, neither can the land yield any. Every door is shut save one and that is the door of Heaven. All means have failed, but the God who works with the means can work without them if He pleases and therefore He opens the windows of Heaven and instead of a shower of rain there is a shower of food.

A substance like coriander seed fell round about the camp—“manna”—so they called it, for they were not sure what it was. They gathered it. They

found it dainty to the taste, exceedingly nourishing and wholesome and they fed upon this bread of Heaven for forty years! Nor did the manna cease till they came unto the land of Canaan where they ate the corn of the land and had no need of miraculous supplies. The hunger which was thus supplied had its design—for, as hunger tames the wild and savage beast—so this was sent to humble the proud and carnal minds of the Israelites—an object of no mean importance.

But that was not the only lesson. The Lord taught them that the sustaining power by which man's life is preserved is not necessarily in any one substance, but is dependent upon the Word of God. It is true that bread nourishes. And the philosopher would say that there is a nutritive power resident in it. But really there is no power of any sort anywhere but in God. The power of nourishing and sustaining bodily life is of God and He, by a continual flowing of His omnipotence, pours the nutritive quality into bread. But if He chose to, He could pour it into stones. If it were His will, He could make the very dust of the earth nutritious and supply the lack of man by new means, for He is no more shut up to bread now than He was in times that have gone by.

Naturalists speak of laws of nature—there is no power in a law, write it as you like, it has no power—the laws of nature are simply the Lord operating in a certain manner, producing certain effects by certain means. This is what we call Law—it is God in action—and the reason why bread sustains the body is because God puts His potency into it, by which it receives nutritive virtues and the body is sustained. Now the Lord, by the manna, said to the children of Israel, “Man is not fed by bread only. He is fed by God's power that comes from Him into the bread and when the bread is lacking, He can infuse that power into the very dews of the night. And they, as they distil, shall become manna full of nutritive energy to sustain your frame and you shall know that the power to nourish is not in the second cause, but in the great First Cause—not in the corn, not in the bread—but in the Lord God Himself.” This was the lesson which they were required to learn.

Now, Brethren, this is a doctrine which may be rendered exceedingly useful to us. God has power to supply our needs and therefore there can be no necessity for us to do wrong in order that we may be fed for He is not tied to any means. He can supply the wants of His children, not in one way, but in fifty ways. No, not in fifty ways, but in ways as countless as the sands upon the sea shore. You know how in olden times the Lord occasionally showed this power in miracles. When Moses, Elijah and our great Lord Himself fasted forty days, their natural lives were sustained without food.

How was this? We cannot tell the exact mode, but we can think of several methods. He could have done it by modifying the exhausting processes of nature. He could bid those powers which consume material work at a slower rate and whereas the body now expends itself daily by ounces, he could make it expend itself by drachms. He could prevent, as it were, the furnace of human life from consuming its coal and yet the vital spark need not be quenched. Or if He pleased, He could give the material necessary for the maintenance of the frame by miraculous means. He could fit and square the stones for the temple of the body and put them in their

place without those masons—the teeth—or those builders—the digestive organs.

He could give to the different secretive glands just that which they required and find, if it were necessary, the substances in the earth, or in the air, or in the sky so that still without the necessity for bread, man might live. Or He could, if He chose to vary the miracle, increase the nutritive power of the food already received, as in Elijah's case, so that a man might go in the strength of one day's meat for forty days. At any rate, God has proved by miracle, that although He chooses to act usually according to certain rules and nourish the body with bread and with meat, yet He is *not* tied to *rules*. He is absolute King and Master and can do as He wills. Even in the subtle processes by which food is digested and assimilated to the flesh and blood and bone and sinew, He can work without the means of ordinary chemistries. He can dissolve without distilling devices and fuse without crucibles.

"But," you say, "that cannot concern us, for He never works miracles now." Yes, but I reply, it is most marvelous for God to be able to do a miraculous thing without a miracle. Do you comprehend me? I think that the working of a miracle is not so wonderful as when that end is gained by ordinary laws and methods—gained without the cessation of any power in nature—simply by Providence overruling the powers just as they are. To be miraculous without miracles is the miracle of miracles. I have seen many miracles which were not miracles, but yet all the more miraculous.

The poor have lacked bread, stones were not turned into bread for them, but they had their bread as much by miracle as if rocks had crumbled into food. We have seen the poor merchant reduced to distress and he said, "Now I cannot see any hope for me. God must rend His heavens and put His hand through the very windows to deliver me." No heavens were rent, but the deliverance came.

Now, the Lord can this day without a miracle work such a miracle that we shall have all our wants supplied, for "man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." You have heard the story of the martyr who was condemned to die. The judge said railingly—"You will be in prison. I shall make you no allowance for food and what can your God do for you? How can He feed you?" "Why," said the poor prisoner, "if He wills it, He can feed me from your table"—and it was so—though unknown to his cruel judge. For until his day of burning came the wife of the judge, touched with sympathy, always secreting food and fed him abundantly even from the persecutor's table.

Perhaps you may have read in "Fox's Acts and Monuments" the wonderful story of Mr. Samuel who by the Bishop of Norwich was condemned to die. He was tied up by a chain about his middle and then condemned to starvation, having about two mouthfuls of bread and two or three drops of water each day until his frame became dry and shriveled. The pains of thirst and hunger were intense for some days, but after that he said he fell into a kind of swoon and he thought he heard a voice saying, "Fear not, Samuel, for from this day you shall never hunger nor thirst again." And from that hour, though it was several days before he went to Heaven in the fiery chariot from the stake, he never knew what it was to thirst or to hunger though he had no greater supplies than before.

I have no doubt the physician would tell us it is possible that as nature will often, after excessive pain, become its own balm by deadening sensibility. So in this case, God was pleased not by miracles, but in the ordinary course of nature to cast the man into a peculiar state in which he was not conscious of the wants of his body. And while no doubt all the ordinary operations were going on which cause hunger and thirst, yet he was not conscious of it and so the Lord was pleased without a miracle to work a miracle, proving that, “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”

There are several very interesting illustrations of this great Truth in the *Life of Mr. Henry Erskine*. “He was often in great straits and difficulties. Once when he and his family had supped at night, there remained neither bread, meal, meat, nor money in the house. In the morning the young children cried for their breakfast and their father endeavored to divert them. He did what he could at the same time to encourage himself and wife to depend upon that Providence that hears the young ravens when they cry. While thus engaged, a countryman knocked hard at the door and called for someone to help him off with his load.

“Being asked from where he came and what he would have, he told them he came from Lady Reaburn with some provisions for Mr. Erskine. They told him he must be mistaken and that it was more likely to be for another Mr. Erskine in the same town. He replied, No, he knew what he said, he was sent to Mr. Henry Erskine and cried, ‘Come, help me off with my load, or else I will throw it down at the door.’ Whereupon they took the sack from him and on opening it, found it well stored with fish and meat.

“At another time, being in Edinburgh, he was so reduced that he had but three halfpence in his pocket. When he was walking about the streets, not knowing what course to steer, one came to him in a countryman’s habit, presented him with a letter in which were enclosed several Scotch ducatoons, with these words written, ‘Sir, receive this from a sympathizing friend. Farewell.’ Mr. Erskine never could find out from where the money came. At another time, being on a journey on foot, his money failed and he was in danger of being reduced to distress. Having occasion to fix his walking-stick in some marshy ground among the rushes, he heard something tinkle at the end of it. It proved to be two half-crowns, which greatly assisted in bearing his charges home. In days of persecution and poverty, God wonderfully interposes for His people.”

I could myself write a Book of Providences quite as remarkable as William Huntingdon’s *Bank of Faith*. God does supply His people’s needs. This is not a matter of fancy or superstition. We have tried it and have proved it and we have as much evidence to prove that Truth as to prove any fact which is taken for granted in science or in philosophy. Man does not to this day live by bread alone, not by ordinary channels of Providence—but God does still supply the lack of His children—and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate.

I have a consciousness that I am addressing someone this morning who little expected to be here, who nevertheless is in such straits that, though a Christian man, he is severely tempted and sternly tried by Satan to do what he knows is wrong, but which he thinks is necessary, because he says, “We must live.” My Brother, let me influence you, as God’s ambassador, do not break a way for yourself. Stand still and see the salvation of

God—it can never be right to do a wrong thing. This is a trial for your faith. Oh, let not your faith fail you, but seek help from God this morning, that you may say, “I can starve, but I cannot sin.” And you may rest assured that God who delivered the three holy children out of the very midst of the fire, when they would not bow down before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, will surely deliver you and if not, yet let your resolution be still firmly fixed—“I will not do this great wickedness and sin against God.”

II. I now turn to the second part of the discourse. The text, evidently enough, has A SPIRITUAL BEARING.

Man shall not live by bread alone. That does but nourish the mere coarse fabric of clay—he lives by every Word which proceeds out of the mouth of God—that nourishes the immortal spirit, that sustains the heavenly flame which God has put there by the work of regeneration and conversion.

1. Now, in the first place, *the text speaks of a hunger and of its consequences.* Very many of you who are now present understand what this hunger means. There was a time when the world suited us well enough—if we had enough to eat and to drink and wherewithal we might be clothed like the rest of the Gentiles. This was all that we sought after. But suddenly God put a new life into us, we knew not how. The first evidence we had of that life was that we began to hunger, we were not satisfied. We were discontented, we were unhappy, we wanted something, we did not know what it was. But this we knew, that it was a something which we must have, or die.

The soul was conscience of sin and hungered for pardon, conscious of guilt and hungered for purity, conscious of absence from God and hungered and thirsted after His presence. It was that blessed hunger which the Savior spoke of upon the Mount, when He said, “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Now, speaking of that hunger, you that know of it can bear witness that it was a most *painful* thing when first we knew it. It was so painful to some of us that we could not rest—it was a hunger that pinched us in our sleep, in our business, in the fields and in the streets. We cried, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him! Oh that I were saved!” And we cried out, “Oh that” and “Would that” and “Ah,” and “Oh!”

Groans that could not be uttered came up even from our soul after a something which we could not explain. We wanted Christ, we had come to know the meaning of that line of our hymn—“Give me Christ or else I die.” What a painful hunger it was! Never did a starving wretch, who could count his bones and almost see through his hands, suffer more anguish than we knew when God had taken away from us the very staff of life and our soul was melted within us by reason of sore famine and straitness of bread.

Then that hunger, moreover, was utterly *insatiable*—nothing could stop it. Friends said, “You must take worldly amusement.” It was like endeavoring to fill a hungry man with shadows. The legalist said, “You must perform such-and-such duties.” It was like attempting to fill a soul with bubbles. Still our hunger cried like the horse-leech, “Give, give, give us something more substantial, more Divine than this.” Oh, how some people try to appease hungry souls with music, pictures, riches, honors, fame. Poor

fools! Did they once know what *spiritual hunger* means, they would renounce their idle and ridiculous attempts. None but Jesus, the Bread of Heaven, can satisfy a hungry soul. Happy are they that have hungered thus, but cursed are they who have never known what it is to hunger and thirst insatiably after Christ.

Next—this hunger is *impetuous*. Sometimes it will come at inconvenient seasons. Master Henry Smith—an old preacher at St. Paul’s Cross, preaching upon the text—“As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that you may grow thereby”—observes, “When hunger assails infants, they neither regard leisure, nor necessity, nor willingness of their mothers—all excuses and business set apart—as soon as they cry for food, they must be fed.” So is it with a man who has begun to feel the need of Christ. It may be said to him, “You can have your religion at home. You do not want to be moping about the shop with it.” Ah, but he cannot help it. He is hungry and hunger knows no clocks. It comes when it likes and, having come, it will not be turned back.

It is of no use saying, “When I have a more convenient season I will satisfy you.” But hunger says, “Now, now, now—I must eat, I must be stopped.” So is it with the truly hungry soul—it wants Christ *now*. If it is not Sunday, if it is not time to go up to worship, it longs to steal away into the cellar, or the attic, or anywhere that it may cry to God its heavenly Father and get some food, for its hunger is of that impetuous character—it is in season and out of season. And then it is so impetuous that the truly hungry soul is like a hungry man, of whom it is said in the Proverb, “Hunger breaks through stone walls.”

“Oh, it is a wet Sunday!” Ah, but the soul is hungry and must go, wet or dry. “Yes, but the streets are miry and muddy.” Well, but the soul is hungry and must go if it is knee-deep in mud. “Yes, but the place is far off.” If it were ten times as far, it must go. “Oh, but there is another place handy.” Yes, but that is the place where they sell philosophic plaster of Paris and the soul says, “I cannot go to be fed on such stuff as that—I must go where there is milk for babes and bread for strong men.” And then they will crowd the place where the bread of Heaven is dispensed and some say, “Why do they crowd the place so?”

Oh, if they knew how hungry the people were, they would not wonder. If there were a baker’s shop in the parish and all the people were starving, you would not marvel if you saw them crowd the door in the morning to get bread. It has been always so where the Lord sends a true Gospel ministry. The Lord never sends bread without sending mouths to eat it. Where the Word is preached there will be ears to hear and hearts to receive it. It is no use to try to stop one of these hungry souls—they must have the Word which proceeds out of the mouth of God. This hunger, I may add, is of an increasing character. The longer a man stays, the more hungry he gets—his hunger does not decline. Conviction of sin does not grow less and less, but sharper and sharper.

Just as hunger gnaws and gnaws the very coats of the stomach, so does this spiritual hunger gnaw into the man’s heart. He is wretched beyond expression, his cry grows shriller and more piercing, till he seems as if he would cut through Heaven itself to get at what he wants. “Mercy, Lord, mercy, mercy, mercy!” And you may say to him, “Why do you clamor

thus?" His only answer will be, "Mercy, Lord, mercy, mercy! Give me Christ, give me Christ, or else I die!"

Now, what is the blessed result of this hunger? Why it makes a man humble. These hungry sinners are never proud—they have not the stomach to play the proud and haughty scorner. Souls that are filled with their own good works and puffed up with their own empty boastings—these high-stomached sinners can boast against Christ and His Gospel—but as for these hungry ones, they are willing to *be* anything and to *do* anything so that they may but be saved. But *now* they love to hear the word "grace"—there was a time when they could not endure it, but now they are so hungry that the word "grace" sounds like a bell that summons them to their needed meals. They love to hear of Divine sovereignty, they are quite willing that God shall be King, so long as they may be but fed.

Now they have no objection to election, if they may but have an interest in the Covenant of Grace. *Now* they have no objection to justification by free grace by the righteousness of Christ for they are emptied of anything of their own. They are humble and therefore they are in a proper state to receive Christ, for, "To this man will I look and with that man will I dwell, with him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembles at My word." Blessed hunger! You that do not have it today, may God soon satisfy you, He will do it sooner or later. And you that have had it, though I hope it will never be renewed to you in all its painfulness, yet I pray that you may always be craving and longing, as new-born babes, desiring the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby.

2. And this brings me to notice, in the second place, the heavenly bread and its surpassing *excellency*. This bread, you see, is the Word of God. Now, the Word is given to us first here in the Bible, as it is written. It is given to us, secondly, from the lips of God's own chosen and appointed ambassadors. He that despises either of these two will soon find himself growing lean in spirit. The book, the Word, is like the flour, but the sermon is the bread, for it is through the sermon that the Word is, as it were, prepared for human palates and brought so that human souls may be able to receive it. The moment the Church of God shall despise the pulpit, God will despise her.

It has been through the ministry that the Lord has always been pleased to revive and bless His Churches and you will notice that these revivals in which it was boasted that there were no ministers engaged, have come to nothing before long. For those that stand are those in which God gets to Himself glory and honor, by using instrumentality. It is a wrong idea altogether that God is glorified by putting instrumentality aside. That is not His glory. His glory is that in our infirmity He still triumphs and that with His own right hand He is able to lay hold upon some jaw-bone of an ass and yet slay therewith heaps upon heaps of Philistines. It is the weakness of the instrumentality used that has a tendency to glorify God and hence He very seldom is pleased to work without some means or other. Most Christians who have grown rich in grace, have been great frequenters of the house of prayer.

But now, why is it that we need this food at all? Why is it that we need the Word of God? I answer first, we need it to *sustain* the life which we have received. When God planted Eden, He did not leave it without watering it, for you read in Genesis, "There went up a mist to water the garden

of Eden.” And yet it is a very strange thing and you ought to notice, too, that God made the grass of the fields before He bade the sun, moon and stars shine upon the earth. So there was the loving thing before there was that upon which it was to depend for its sustenance—to show that He could maintain life without the external means—and that even the grass was not to live by the outward alone, but by the sustaining energy and secret omnipotence of God.

Now, if Eden in perfection needed to be watered, much more do we. We are plants of the Lord’s right-hand planting, but like roots in a dry ground we need the river of God, which is full of water, to flow hard by our roots. We need the dew which fed upon the mountains of Hermon to moisten us every hour, lest like dewless Gilboa we should be bleak and barren, without any lush greenery to make glad the heart of God or man. As life spiritual depends upon God to give it, so upon God to sustain it. Only He who makes us Christians can keep us so and hence the need of Divine food.

We need this Divine food not only to keep us barely alive, but *to make us grow* and as Peter says, “As new-born babes,” we need to grow. Now, how shall we grow without food? Supposing it possible to retain life, do we wish always to be babes? Would we always be little children? No, let us pray that we may become young men in Christ and grow up to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. But how shall this be unless the Word of God becomes our spiritual food?—unless in hearing it we see Christ and eat His flesh and drink His blood?

You do not expect your children to grow without feeding them and you must not expect to grow yourself. Besides, this food is necessary *to strengthen us* when we have grown up. A full grown man, though he is a perfect *man*, may still be very imperfect in many matters. He is perfectly a man, but still he is weak. How can we wonder that a man is weak if he does not eat? It is no wonder if Christians find themselves weak in prayer, weak in suffering, weak in action, weak in faith and weak in love if they neglect to feed upon the Word of God. O Souls, there are many among you that are sick and some that are ready to die because you have shut your mouths against the bread of Heaven and have gone day by day without sitting down at the banqueting table and feeding upon the marrow and fatness of the promise.

Moreover, we need to have spiritual food also for our joy as well as for our strength. How often do you see a man sad and troubled, who, if he had sufficient sustenance would soon have sparkling eyes and a shining face? Many Christians, I do not doubt, are very low and miserable because they do not feed upon the Word. If they ate the roll as Ezekiel did, they would soon find it like honey for its sweetness. If we did but lean more upon the breast of Christ and eat more often from His table and drink from His cup, our peace would flow like a river and our righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Are you starving your souls? If so, there is no wonder that your joys are dead and hang their heads like wilted and withered things. I trust, my dear Brethren, many of us know what it is to feed to the full upon the Word of God. And do you not bear me witness that it is *rich* food? There is nothing in the whole world that can so content the spirit as the Word of God. We have read many books, we have listened to the maxims of philosophers, we have gathered up the lessons of experience but put them al-

together—they are not equal to one text of Scripture. It is said of one Christian man, who had spent a great part of his life in translating Livy, that when he came to die he wished he had spent that time in reading the Word of God.

Those who translate the Bible into foreign tongues always say it is a great blessing to them. Instead of growing tired through having to stop long over one word to find out its meaning, they find the word more sweet than before. There is rich food both in the printed Word and in the spoken Word. Then again, what *plain* food it is! There is nothing like plain food. But some people come in to listen to the Gospel minister and they say, “Ah, it is not intellectual enough for me!” Such infants would like to live on sponge-cakes, or filthy gingerbread. But we think the plainer the food, the better. We had rather have it just as it is, without any flavoring or seasoning, just as we find it here.

But, while it is plain food, yet to those who know it, it is very *sweet* food. Though some say, “It is light bread,” as they did in the wilderness, you never loathe this bread. It never palls upon your taste—you are satisfied and you are even satiated with fatness—you are never disgusted through having too much of it. You feel that you would like to swim in a river of such wine as this. You would like to be shut up in a granary of this heavenly corn. You would be but too glad to have nothing else to think upon but Jesus and Him crucified. No other book to read but that Word. No other light to read it by but the light of the Spirit and I think I may add, you would wish to live in no other house but in God’s house—for your desire is, “Lord, evermore give us this bread.”

The Word of God, then, is rich food, but it is plain food. And let us add, it is *wholesome* food. The man that feeds on God’s Word will not be puffed up with pride, or sloth, or lust. You may feed on the best of men’s books and soon grow warped in your judgment, but feed on the pure Word of God and you will surely find nothing that is common or unclean in it, but everything that shall make you grow up to be strong men in Christ Jesus. And then, once more, this food of the Word of God is *abundant* food. Millions live upon it and there is enough for millions more. We have great appetites sometimes and we want great promises. Oh, and there are great promises for us.

**“What more can He say than to you He has said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”**

Our great trials make very great draws upon the treasury, but the treasury never will be emptied for all that. We are great spenders, but bless the Lord, we have great incomes. The great income of the promise is far more than the outgoing of our trials or our afflictions can ever need. There is abundant bread and oh, it is bread that we love. We want no change in it. You have been feeding on it, some of you, these forty years and I might turn to some that have lived on it for sixty years, yet you do not want any new-fangled doctrines—you want none of the neology of the times—you want the old Word as much as ever you did. And I can say, though I am but a young believer in Christ, that that same Gospel note which some twelve years ago made glad these ears, is just as glorious a note as it was then. And I feel as I grow older, a closer attachment to the doctrines of grace, a more complete satisfaction with the written Word and a more intense delight in telling it forth to the ears of the people.

3. And now, lastly, *a great privilege involving a consequent duty*. We have been made to eat manna, as angels' food which *we did not know*. It was far above our carnal judgments, yet they who feared the Lord said it was like wafers made with honey. Israel found it to be very sweet and indeed it is said by the Rabbis that the manna had such a peculiarity about it, that it was always the flavor that a man wished it to be. And I think it is very much so with Gospel preaching—if a man chooses it to be disagreeable to him, it will be—but if he desires it to be sweet to him, it will be. He will be sure to be fed if he wants to be fed. For so is it with the precious Book—very much of its flavor is in our own mouths and when our mouths are out of taste we think the Bible has lost its savor. But it has not. It is *our mouths* which are to blame, not the Word of God. It is often your ears that are to blame, not the preacher. Do not be so quick to blame him, but be a little more rapid in examining yourself.

“Neither did our fathers know.” By nature, however much we may respect them, they are no better than ourselves and they knew nothing about this subtle, mysteriously generous way by which God supplies the needs of the souls of His people. Well now, if God has given us such food as this, Brothers and Sisters, I think the least thing we can do is to go and gather it, for when the manna fell, you know, it did not fall into their tents, much less into their mouths. No, it fell round about the camp so that every man had to get his basket and go forth and gather it. He that gathered much had nothing over, he that gathered little had no lack, but they *all* had to gather it.

And, mark, they had to gather it *every day*. They were not, having gathered once, to say, “Now I have all I want,” for it bred worms and stank if they kept it. They must gather it fresh and fresh. Now this is what we ought to do with God's Word. We ought to read it and having read it once we must recollect that what we have read will breed worms unless we go and read again. It is not what we gathered yesterday that will serve for today, we must gather it today—so we must open our Bibles every morning with this prayer—“Give me this day my daily bread.” We must get some choice text to fill our basket—if we read a chapter we shall have nothing over—if we read a verse we shall have no lack.

Then we put the Word in our memories and we shall surely find, perhaps not the first hour, but some other hour in the day that it will taste like wafers made with honey to us. It is astonishing how much a man may know of the Bible by learning a text a day and how much he may know experimentally by watching the events of the day and interpreting them in the light of the text. If you cannot retain by memory a whole passage, never mind that—take a short text and let it be under your tongue all day—and be looking out for a commentary upon it.

I do not mean Matthew Henry or Scott, or Gill. I mean your own *daily experience*. Be looking out to see how the Lord translates that text to you by His own Providence and you will frequently see a striking relation between the text that was given you in the morning and the trials or the mercies that are given you during the day. At any rate, let the Word of God be the man of your right hand. Don't become so busy reading magazines, newspapers and new books and so forth, that you forget this—this new Book, this that is always new and always old—always having a freshness in it.

Like a well, it is always springing up—not with musty, stale water—but with fresh water that has never sparkled in the sun before and in all its virgin luster of purity scatters jewels on the right hand and on the left. Let us go to this fountain and drink fresh and fresh. You will not find the Word of God dropped into your mouth. You must go and gather it outside the tents. Sometimes the Lord will apply a promise without your having read it yourselves, but this is not generally the case. You must dig in this field where lies hidden the pearl of price unknown and digging there you shall discover it to your heart's delight.

And then let us mind also that we be much in the hearing of the Word as well as in the reading of it. Let us, when we come up to the house of God, come there to be fed. Oh, there are many who think that it is mere form to spend a Sunday in God's house. I do not know but what these are the worst of Sabbath-breakers, after all, for what do they do? They say the Table of the Lord is contemptible and His house is despicable and they snuff at it and say, "What a weariness it is, what dry dull days Sundays are!" It is not so with the child of God. He comes up to the house of God with this prayer on his heart and on his tongue—"Lord, give Your servant food for my soul today."

Beloved, when you are in a right state, you are like birds in the nest—when the mother bird comes with the worm, the babies are all stretching their necks to the food, for they are all hungry and want it. And so should hearers be ready to get hold of the Word, not wanting that we should force it down their throats—but waiting there, opening their mouths wide that they may be filled—receiving the Word in the love of it, taking in the Word as the thirsty earth drinks in the rain of Heaven. Hungry souls love the Word. Perhaps the speaker may not always put it as they may like to hear it, but as long as it is God's Word, it is enough for them.

They are like persons who are sitting at the reading of a will. The lawyer has a squeaking voice, perhaps. Or he mispronounces the words, but what of that?—they are listening to see what is left to *them*. So is it with God's people. It is not the preacher, but the preacher's God that these hungry ones look to. Why, if when you were very poor, some benevolent neighbor should send you a loaf of bread by a man who had a club foot—you would not look at the foot—you would look at the bread! And so is it with the hearers of the Word. They know if they wait until they get a perfect preacher, they will get no preacher at all. But they are willing to take the man, imperfections and all, provided he brings the Master's bread. And though he is but a lad and can bring but a few barley loaves and fishes, yet since the Master multiplies the provision, there is enough for all and they feed to the full.

But now I am speaking to some who never feel this hunger. Ah, poor Souls, you are all flesh and you have a fleshly hunger and that satisfied, it is enough. Well, remember that it is only spirit that can see the kingdom of God and as there is no spirit in you, where God is you can never come. If there were that new principle in you—the new nature, the spirit—you would have a spiritual hunger. But the natural man discerns not the things that are of God and while you are thus merely what you were born, a natural man, without the spirit, you will never hunger after spiritual things, for the flesh shall be satisfied and that will be enough for you. But in the next world, your hunger will come and your thirst, too.

Scarcely need I remind you of the text, "In Hell he lifted up his eyes being in torment and he said, Father Abraham, send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue." Better to thirst now than thirst forever. Better to hunger now than to hunger where bread will be denied. Do you feel your need of Christ this morning? Do you confess your sin? Remember, the gate of Heaven's granary is never locked, it is always open. If there is a soul here that desires to be saved, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." To believe on Him is to let Him be for you what you never can be for yourselves, that is—an atonement for your sin by His blood—a righteousness for your covering by *His* good works.

Believe in Him—give yourself up to Him—trust Him—be saved according to His way and His will—and if the Lord has made you willing to be nothing that Christ may be everything, you are saved! He that brings a man into such a state as that has brought him into salvation. Trust in Jesus, poor hungry Sinner and faith shall feed you to the full. Empty though you are, open the mouth of prayer and stretch out the hands of faith and He will give you water out of the brook, yes, out of the flinty rock and with bread from Heaven shall He sustain you.

The Lord grant, by His grace, that we may be among those of whom Christ said, "Blessed are they that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"

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THE PILGRIM'S GRATEFUL RECOLLECTIONS NO. 939

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 3, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And He humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna, which you knew not, neither did your fathers know; that He might make you know that man does not live by bread only, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live. Your raiment waxed not old upon you, neither did your foot swell, these forty years. You shall also consider in your heart, that, as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you. Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him.”
Deuteronomy 8:3-6.*

OUR aptness to forget God's mercies, is, alas, too conspicuous. It has been said that the annals of a prosperous and peaceful country are singularly uninteresting. Does this arise from the fact that we do not make memoranda of our mercies, or at least if we do, they are far more readily blotted out than the record of our sorrows? We trace our joys in the sand, but we write our afflictions on marble. We forget the streams of mercy, never ceasing, which flow so continually parallel with our pathway.

If we thus, ungratefully forget, it should cause us serious reflections when we see that God does not forget. Here in this Book He brings to His people's memories all the mercies they have received, because they were always present before His own mind. The child may forget the kindness of its mother, but the mother does not forget what she bore, and what she has sacrificed for her child. The friend may forget what he has received, but it is not likely that the benefactor will forget what he has bestowed. If God's memory, therefore, records all that He has given me, let me be ashamed to let my memory suffer these things to slip. What God counts worthy of His Divine recollection let me record on the pages of my memory, and often let me peruse the record.

We are also far too slow to draw the inference of obligation from benefits received. We receive the blessing, but we do not always feel that a proportionate debt is due in return to God, the bounteous Giver of every good gift. Yet Divine Grace has its obligations as well as laws—obligations which honorable minds reckon to be among the first to be discharged. If I do not do what I ought because I fear the Law, at any rate let me prove that I am not so base as to be ungrateful to undeserved mercy and love.

It has been said by some, and there have been others whose lives have almost proved it, that the driving of the Law is more effectual to produce works than the sweet drawings of the Gospel. But it ought not to be so—and if it is so, the fault is in the man acted upon, and not in the principle of gratitude. For with right-minded men, with men educated by the Spirit

of God, with men who are lifted up out of the common mass of mankind and endowed with the higher life, the highest motive that can be suggested even by infinite wisdom is the motive which is drawn from the transcendent love and Grace of God.

Now, Brethren, though we forget our obligations, it is clear from the text that God does not—for here, after giving a summary of His benefits—He concludes by drawing an inference with the word, “therefore,” and He tells Israel that having received so much, they were bound to walk in His ways and in His fear—and to keep His Commandments. If He thus considers, whose wisdom none dare dispute, let us voluntarily, cheerfully, and practically concede that such is the very Truth. And let us ask that He will help us to be obedient, and resolve that, receiving His help, we will say in our hearts and lives—

***“Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I burn;
Chosen of Him before time began,
I choose Him in return.”***

I shall now ask your attention to the list of favors given in the text, with the view of enforcing the Divine conclusions from them.

I. LET US PASS IN REVIEW THE FAVORS OF THE LORD, taking what He did for Israel as being typical of what He has done for us.

1. The first blessing mentioned in our text is that of humbling—“And He humbled them, and suffered them to hunger.” Not very highly esteemed among men will this favor be. And at first, perhaps, it may be regarded by ourselves as being more of a *judgment*—one of the terrible things in righteousness—than a great favor from the Most High. But rightly judged, this is one of the most admirable proofs of the Lord’s loving kindness, that He does not leave His people in their natural pride and obstinacy, but by acts of Grace brings them to their right mind.

Note in the text that the humbling was produced by hunger. What makes a man so humble as to be thoroughly in want? It was not hunger for luxury, merely—bread and water failed them. How could the soil beneath them of hot sand yield them a harvest? Where could they find a stream to slake their dreadful thirst which the broiling sun and the arid sand continually increased? To want bread and water is a short way of making a man feel that he is but a man, and that he is dependent, very dependent, upon the Providence of God.

Their hunger was, no doubt, increased in its power to humble them by their position. They were not hungry, in Goshen, nor in Canaan, but hungry in a waste, howling wilderness, where, let them search as they would, they could find nothing available for sustenance. They were reduced to the most abject condition of spirit, and broken by the most urgent wants. And yet, I say, this was a great *blessing* to them, for, being humbled, they were put in a position where God could bless them.

Speaking after the manner of men, there are some positions where God cannot bless us. If we are proud and lifted up, it is not consistent to the Divine honor and glory that He should smile upon us. But when we are laid low at the foot of the Throne, then there is an opportunity for God to come and deal with us in pity and Grace. It was good, therefore, for Israel to be placed where God’s mercy could flow to them. Being there, and being hungry, there were opportunities given for Divine Grace and bounty. A

man who is not hungry cannot be fed—why needs he, at any rate, to be fed? And if fed, he will not be grateful as a hungry man.

But now when they are famishing, now will God work His miracles. The open windows of Heaven shall, to their astonishment, rain down their daily food, and up through those open casements shall their praise and thankfulness ascend to the Throne of God. There is room for mercy where there is misery—space for Grace where there is poverty. Happy was Israel, therefore, to be humbled by hunger, and placed where mercy could glorify itself. They were thus, by their being made needy, brought to receive superior supplies. If they had possessed the corn of Egypt, they would have missed the manna of Heaven.

If beneath their feet there had sprung up crops of common wheat from which they could have reaped their daily supplies, they would have missed the angels' food which fell from Heaven around their camp. Absence of meals was more than compensated by the presence of manna. It is a blessed thing to have a famine of the creature, if thereby we are supplied by the Creator!

Now, my dear Friends, just remember for a minute, that this was your case and mine. Years ago, in the case of some of us, the Lord met with us and brought us into a painful state of *spiritual* hunger. All our supplies failed us. We had thought before that time we were at least as good as others, that we might somehow work our way to Heaven, and we were satisfied, after a fashion, with worldly joys. But the Lord suddenly took away our earthly comforts, or took away our rest and enjoyment of them, and at the same time we saw sin and its punishment before us—and we were brought to a condition in which we were like those in the wilderness, who were afflicted with fiery serpents, and bitten with scorpions.

Our thoughts would not suffer us to rest. Our sins plagued and tormented us. We looked round for comfort, and we could find none. We looked and looked again, and we only found fresh cause to despair. We were driven right away from self. What a mercy it was that we were so humbled, for then the Lord could reveal His love to us! What a blessing it was that we were so wretched, for then there was room for Jesus to come with His pardoning blood, and the Holy Spirit to come with His Divine quickening, and the promise of the Father to come with all its fullness of Grace and Truth. And oh, how blessedly, being deprived of earthly consolations, were we supplied with heavenly ones!

Our self-confidence, what a blessing it was to lose it, for we had confidence in Christ instead of it! Our carnal security, happy were we to see it wither, for we had security in Christ given us in the place of it and our self-righteousness. Thrice happy was it for us that it was totally dried up, for now we come to drink water out of the living Rock of Christ Jesus, and He has become our joy, our song, and our salvation. You remember well that humbling season—you have had such seasons since. You have been brought, since then, into great spiritual straits, when you found that all the supposed Grace which you had in store utterly failed you, even as the manna which the children of Israel unbelievably tried to lay by in store—it bred worms and stank.

You have been brought down to deep spiritual poverty, but that has been a great blessing to you, for each renewed season of soul poverty has been the prelude for a fresh season of Divine manifestation of Grace.

When I find myself brought very low in spirit, and made to see the depravity of my heart, and to groan over my own weakness, I have learned to expect better things. I have been thankful for humblings because I have learned by experience that when I am emptied the Lord means to fill me. That when I am brought low it is only a preface to being lifted by the Divine Spirit.

Surely for these reasons we may reckon our humblings among the choicest favors of Heaven. And as here the humbling stands first in the text, so let it not be last in our song. As it is put here as the frontispiece to the volume of grateful remembrances, let it be prominent in our minds. "He humbled you, and caused you to hunger." Oh, blessed hour in which he prostrated my soul at His feet! Oh, happy season when He stripped me of what I thought my glory, but which were filthy rags! Oh, thrice memorable period when He wounded me with the arrows of conviction, when He slew me by the Law—for this was but a preparation for healing me with His touch of love, and making me alive with the eternal life which is in Christ Jesus. The first mercy, then, is that of humbling the soul.

2. I shall have to notice, in the second place, the Divine feeding. We shall now see ourselves mirrored in the case of Israel as in a glass. "He humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you." How sweetly that follows, "suffered you to hunger, and fed you." The light close on the heels of the darkness. Is there a desponding soul here who has been suffered to hunger? "Blessed are you that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for you shall be filled." That "and" in the text is like a diamond rivet, none can ever take it out or break it. "He suffered you to hunger, and fed you." He who suffers you to hunger will be sure to feed you yet upon the bountiful provisions of His Grace. Be of good cheer, poor mourning Soul.

Now let us notice what our spiritual food has been, Brethren. I said the first remark shall be, we have been fed spiritually every day. We have had day by day our souls' daily bread. As the manna fell daily, so has the food of our souls been given us from time to time by the power of the Spirit of God. Israel in the wilderness was always on the brink of starvation, yet never knew a want. There was nothing between the people's being starved except (and what a blessed exception!), except the Divine interposition. They could not go to their stores, and say, "Here are tons of food." They could not, as you may in going down the Thames, look at huge warehouses full of corn laid by in store.

No, no, there was not a halfpenny worth of store in the house of any Israelite as he went to bed, the whole place was bare, all was gone. There was nothing between them and being starved, I say, but the Divine faithfulness. This is precisely how I have lived, by His Grace, before the Lord ever since I have known Him. There has been nothing between my soul and falling from Grace except the Divine faithfulness—no, nothing whatever of past experience, or all the present knowledge that could have stood me in any place in the time of trial. Not a man among you has anything spiritually to depend upon but the daily interpositions of Covenant Grace.

Let the child of God remember this, and when he feels himself very weak in himself, and driven to his Lord in prayer, let him rejoice that he is just where God would have him be. When I am weak, then am I strong. When I have nothing, then have I all things. While I have nothing to depend upon of the old corn of the land, the manna will continually fall, and

day by day my strength shall be renewed. Has that been your experience, dear Brothers and Sisters? If it has been, then everyday give a fresh song to God, who interposes between your soul and death.

Yet though the manna came every day, it was always sufficient. I spoke of starvation, but Israel never had any reason even to think of it, for the provender which God sent was not limited so that any man could say, "It is not sufficient for me." What sufficed one man might not suffice another in ordinary food, but of the manna every man had enough. So to this day it has been in Grace with every Believer. God has given to you and to me, up till this hour, all the Grace we have needed, and though He has given us so much, there is as much more left in the infinite provision as if He had never drawn upon it. Go to the richest man's store, and take something out, and there is so much less remaining. But when the manna came from Heaven, there was just as much manna left after it had come as before.

So the Grace of God is just as all-sufficient after you and I have received as it was at the first. The only stint the Israelite knew in the matter of the manna was the limit of his own capacity to receive. He might have as much as ever he could eat. And if we have not had more Grace, it has been our own fault. If we have not lived nearer to God, if we have not possessed more joy, or been more useful—we have not been straitened in our God—we have been straitened in our heart. We have had the provisions of His Grace day by day. We have had as much as we asked for, and often a great deal more. And we might have had as much more as we would if we had but had larger desires and greater confidence in God. The Lord's name be praised for daily food in this wilderness, and for sufficient food.

The manna was a very mysterious thing. It is said in the text that it was food that they did not know, and which their fathers had not known. And, certainly, the Grace of God which has kept us to this day is a most mysterious power upon us. The worldling does not understand what it is to eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood, and though we know what it is by sweet experience, we could not explain it. We have lived to this day upon the promises of God, upon the inflowing of the Divine Spirit into our souls, but we cannot tell from where it comes nor where it goes.

Nor do our fathers after the flesh know. And though our sires, who have gone before us to Heaven, fed on the same food, yet it was to them mysterious as it is to us. Talk of wonders! The Christian man is the greatest wonder in the world! Speak of miracles! What is the Christian life but a continued miracle? A series of miracles, like links in a chain, one following the other—kept alive in the midst of death, and supported by a marvellous food—which the world knows nothing of. We are wonders unto many, and more so to ourselves.

Brethren, the manna came from Heaven, and here is the very marrow of the Truth of God as to what we have lived upon spiritually—we have lived upon heavenly food. If our supplies had depended on human ministry, they would have failed. If they had depended upon the mere reading of good books, there might be times when we could read to profit. But the everlasting well-springs of Divine love are not affected by our condition of body or of mind—the Grace and love that are treasured up in Christ Jesus come to us when creature cisterns are broken, and all the help of friends is unavailing.

From You, great God, from You we have derived the nutriment of our spiritual life, and it has always come in due season—up to this hour we have known no lack. You have made us hunger when we have looked to earth for supplies, but when we have turned to You our souls have been satisfied with marrow and fatness! Blessed be Your name forevermore! Dear Brothers and Sisters, do endeavor to live more and more upon unseen things. Let your fellowship be with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Look not to the granaries of Egypt. Stay not yourself on an arm of flesh. Israel in the wilderness had no granaries, they looked neither to Moab nor Ammon—they looked to Jehovah, and to Jehovah alone. And let it be so with you, and, assuredly, even in the time of famine, your spirit shall be satisfied.

The children of Israel in the wilderness were fed on the best food that ever fell to the lot of mortals. They did eat angels' food. Egypt and Assyria, with all their wealth, tasted not of bread which dropped from Heaven. But poor Israel in the howling wilderness was fed with royal dainties. Let the sons of earth be nourished as they may, and fattened like kings' sons, yet there are no faces that are so fair to look upon with holy joy and exultation as the faces of the men who feed on Christ Jesus who is the Bread that came down from Heaven.

There are none who are so blessed as those who live upon God Himself—for they have this for their surpassing excellence—that eating as they do this bread, they live forever. He that eats other bread derives temporary nourishment from it, but before long he dies. He who feeds on Christ feeds on immortal food, and more—he becomes immortal himself—the food transforms the man. Matchless is the manna which comes from Heaven, for it makes us heavenly and bears us up to the Heaven from where it came!

They who live on Christ become like Christ. Being fed upon Him, they become conformed unto His image, made meet to be partakers of the glory of God in Heaven. I wish I could speak so as to stir your hearts with gratitude, but the subject ought to do it without words of mine! And, sitting calmly here with Jordan sparkling before us, and Canaan hard by on the other shore, we are bound to remember all the way whereby the Lord our God has led us—and the food which up to this day has never failed us.

3. The third favor mentioned in the text, upon which we will pause awhile, is the remarkable raiment. "Your raiment waxed not old upon you." This has been interpreted by some to mean that they were able constantly to procure from the surrounding nations fresh changes of clothing. Others have said, and there is truth in the remark, that they had among them persons of great skill who were able to use the produce of the flocks and herds, so that they were not without clothes to supply their needs. Indeed, if that is all the meaning, it declares a great cause for thankfulness.

The tribes never became a ragged regiment—though always on the march they were always well dressed—their clothes waxed not old. But I am not among those who like to blot out every miracle from the Word of God. As the history of the children in the wilderness is altogether miraculous, and cannot be accounted for without the introduction of Divine interposition, it seems to me that it is as natural to expect their raiment to be miraculously given as to expect their food to be. And the run of the

text, if it were read by an intelligent child without any prejudice, one way or the other, would suggest a miracle.

It stands in the midst of miracles, and is one itself. "Your raiment waxed not old upon you." Certainly this was the old interpretation which the rabbis put upon it—that by a continuous miracle their clothes did not wear out for the whole space of forty years. Though subject to the ordinary wear and tear incidental to traveling, yet their garments still continued to be as good at the end of forty years as they were when first they left the land of Egypt. I believe that to be what the text means. And how, spiritually it is the case with us. "Your garments waxed not old upon you."

Do you remember, Brethren, when first you put your garments on? I do well remember when first I discovered, as Adam did in the garden, that I was naked, and I hid myself. I tried then, as you did, to make a fig leaf covering for myself—that would have waxed old soon enough—for the fig leaves of our own righteousness soon wither and decay. But I was pointed to the righteousness which God had prepared, even as Adam and Eve were pointed to the coats of skins which the Lord God had made ready for them. And then I put on the robe of Christ's righteousness which He had provided, and glory be to His name—that garment has not waxed old upon me yet!

Is it not so with you? You are not found naked this day. Perhaps you have been a Believer forty or fifty years, but that robe of Grace is ever new and evermore as fresh as at the first, and as suitable as at the beginning. All your nakedness is hidden from the face of God, and hidden from yourself, too. You can now rejoice in the Lord, and approach Him without fear. You do not want to hide yourself, but rather you wish to *show* yourself to God, and you say, "Search me, O God, and know my ways, try me, and know my heart." Our garment, then, which covers our nakedness, has not waxed old.

But we have a garment for more than this, namely, to make us acceptable. Jacob put on his brother Esau's clothes, and he obtained the blessing of his father. We, too, have put on the garments of Christ, and have won the blessing. He who went into the feast and had not on a wedding garment was cast out. The wedding garment which we wear today is the righteousness which Christ has worked out for us—which He works in us by His Spirit. Now, blessed be His name, that which we put on many years ago, has not waxed old yet—we are still accepted in the Beloved.

That robe has endured much wear and tear. What with our imperfections and sins, shortcomings and transgressions—if it had not been Divinely worked, it would have been worn out long ago. But blessed be His name, I know, and you know, that we are as acceptable to God this day, as we were when first we believed in Jesus. We are still dear children, still Beloved of the Lord, still heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus—our garment of acceptance has not waxed old.

Besides, we have the garment of consolation. Men put on their clothes to warm and comfort them, and how often have we wrapped ourselves about with the promises of God's Word—and with the doctrines of Revelation—and made garments of them to screen us from the cold blast of tribulation? These, also, have not waxed old. Glory be to God for those everlasting promises! When we were young we trusted in them, and when we are old and gray-headed we shall still find them to be fountains of con-

solation as clear, and true, and sure, and precious as ever they were. You cannot point me to a stale promise in all God's Book. Neither can you find me a worn-out doctrine.

The rabbis say that when the young Israelites grew older their clothes grew as they grew. I do not know how that was, but I do know that let us grow in mental stature as we may, the doctrines of the Gospel still are suitable for us. If they were like milk to us when we were babes, they are strong meat to us when we become men. They always meet our needs and conditions, and thus we can joyfully say that the garment which covers our nakedness, which adorns us before God, and affords us consolation, has not waxed old these forty years. Blessed be the name of the Most High for all this!

4. But we pass on again. The next blessing for which we ought to be grateful is that sustained personal strength. Our spiritual vigor has not decayed during our sojourn in the wilderness, for it is written, "Neither did your foot swell." A swollen foot is the common ailment of pilgrims in the desert. Much marching over hot sand soon makes the feet become swollen and puffed up, or else it hardens them, and some read this text, "Neither did your foot become callous." In neither way in Israel's case was the foot deformed, nor was walking rendered painful.

For forty years the pilgrims footed it without pain, and though it was a weary land, yet their strength held out till they crossed the Jordan, and came into the promised rest. So it has been with us. Our foot has not swelled these forty years. In the way of perseverance we have been maintained and preserved. Personally I admire the Grace which has kept me in my course, though assailed by many, many fierce temptations, and exposed to great perils in my position. If I wonder, I dare say each one of you have to wonder, too. There have been scores of times since you made a profession, when your feet were almost gone, your steps had well near slipped, and yet your foot has not swollen. You are still on the way, in the way, and nearing the end of the way, kept consistent, kept in godliness, even until now.

What a blessing! Suppose you had been permitted to faint? Suppose you had been suffered to fall on the road, and had no longer held on your way? You know what the result must have been, for only to perseverance is the promise made. But God has helped you to hold on to this hour, and He will aid you even to the end. Up till now you have held on—have confidence—He will keep you still. Your foot has not swelled in the way of perseverance.

Neither have you been lamed in the way of service. Perhaps you have been called to do much work for Christ, yet you have not grown tired of it, though sometimes tired *in* it. Still you have kept to your labor, and found help in it. If you were ever called to preach the Gospel, you would be compelled to see, even if you closed your eyes, how dependent you were upon God. Sunday after Sunday, and weekday after weekday, preaching still, having need to say something fresh continually, and often wondering where it will come from. The preacher is grateful that as yet his foot has not swollen.

You, too, have gone to your Sunday school, or you have held your position as a solitary testifier in the family, or you have served God as a missionary from door to door, and you have thought, "Surely, I shall come to

the end of all I know, and all I can do," but you have not. Your foot has not swollen all these years, you have kept on in the way of service. So, too, your foot has not swollen in the way of faith. Such little faith you had at first, that you might well have thought it would all die out by now.

See a spark that floats in the sea, see a stone that hangs in the air, surely these must come to an end. The one must be extinguished, and the other must fall! But it has not been so. God has not quenched the smoking flax, nor broken the bruised reed. Still your foot has not swollen. You believe in Jesus yet, and notwithstanding your unbelief, your faith still can give forth the cry of a loving child, and say, "Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief."

In addition to all this, your foot has not swollen in the way of fellowship. You have walked with God, and you have not grown weary of the holy communion. Sometimes that walking with God has cost you much effort, much struggling with inward corruptions, much determination to be clear from the customs and the ways of ungodly men. And you had long ago been tired had not you leaned on your Beloved. But you have leaned so much on Him that your foot has not swollen. You can still walk with Him, and hope to do so until you come to your journey's end—and sit down with Him forever and ever.

Moreover, dear Brothers and Sisters, your foot has not swollen in the way of joy. You were happy young men in Christ Jesus, and you are happy fathers now. You were happy young women when first you gave your heart to Christ, and you have grown to be matronly now, but you are as happy as in younger days. The novelty has not worn off, or rather one novelty has been succeeded by another—fresh discoveries have broken out upon you—and Jesus has still to you the dew of His youth. If the old light has passed away, yet the new light of a still brighter sun has come, and you are nearing the "sacred, high, eternal noon," where the Glory of God and of the Lamb shed splendor all around. He who walks with God shall never weary, though through all eternity he continues the hallowed march. For all this we give to God our thanks yet again.

5. Bear with me when I notice in the fifth place the memorable blessing of chastisement. I must call special attention to it because God does so in these words, "You shall also consider in your heart." That unswollen foot, and that unworn garment you need not so much value as this—for this you are specialty bid to consider—to meditate upon in your very heart. Your deepest thoughts are to be given to it, and, consequently, your highest praises. "Consider in your heart, that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you." My dear Friends, I speak as one of the most humble of God's servants, but I dare not withhold my testimony.

I can truly say of everything I have ever tasted in this world of God's mercy—and my path has been remarkably strewn with Divine loving kindness. I feel more grateful to God for the bodily pain I have suffered, and for all the trials I have endured of many sorts, than I do for anything else except the gift of His dear Son. I am sure I have derived more real benefit and permanent strength and growth in Grace, and every precious thing, from the furnace of affliction, than I have ever derived from prosperity. In fact, I have for years looked upon my great prosperity as being sent as a test and trial of my Graces.

I regard it as the severest of ordeals which I must lay before God humbly, and ask for Grace to bear. But I have learned to regard affliction as being a sheltered nook in which I am more than usually screened from temptation, and in which I might expect to have the peculiar Presence of the Lord my God. I am not fearful of my ballast, but I am very anxious about my sail. Moreover, I have discovered that there is a sweetness in bitterness not to be found in honey—a safety with Christ in a storm which may be lost in a calm. I know not how to quite express my meaning, but even lowness of spirits and deep sadness have a peculiar charm within them which laughter may emulate in vain.

It is good for me that I have been afflicted. Now I think if I were to take the testimony of many Christian friends here, they would have to say much the same. So then, as you know all this, let me say nothing about it but just this—ponder and consider much the gratitude you owe to God for His chastening rod. Dwell much in your heart upon what God evidently regards as one of His distinguishing blessings. Do not pass over slightly what God would have you consider. Count the Cross and the rod to be doubly worthy of your deepest thought. “Hear the rod and Him that has appointed it.” Remember that whenever you are chastened you are *not* chastened as a slave-master smites his victim, nor as a judge orders the criminal to be lashed, but as a man chastens his *son*, so are you chastened.

Your chastisement is a sign of sonship, it is a token of *love*. It is intended for your good. Accept it, therefore, in the spirit of sonship, and “despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when you are corrected of Him.” Remember that chastisement is an assured token of the Covenant relationship. It is the Lord your God that chastens you. If He were not your God He might let you alone. If He had not chosen you to be His own, He would not take such care of you. If He had not given Himself to be your Treasure, He might not be so diligent in weaning you from all other treasures. But because you are His He will withdraw your love away from this poor world.

Perhaps He will take one child after another from you, that all the love that was lavished on the child might flow towards Himself. Perhaps He will leave you a widow, that the love that ran in the channel of a husband may run altogether to Himself. Perhaps He will take away your riches, that the consolation you did derive from them may be all derived from Him. Perhaps He will smite you, and then lay you on His own bosom, faint and helpless, that you may derive a strength and a joy from fellowship, close, and near with Himself. A closeness which you would never have had if it had not been that these other joys were removed.

I have seen a little plant beneath an oak tree sheltered from the storm, and wind, and rain, and it felt pleased and happy to be so screened. But I have seen the woodman come with his axe and fell the oak, and the little plant has trembled with fear because its protection was removed. “Alas, for me,” it said, “the hot sun will scorch me, the driving rain will drown me, and the fierce wind will tear me up by the roots.” But instead of these dreadful results, the shelter being removed, the plant has breathed freer air, drank more of the dews of Heaven, received more of the light of the sun, and it has sprung up and borne flowers which else had never bloomed, and seeds that never else had sown themselves in the soil.

Be glad when God thus visits you, when He takes away these overshadowing but dwarfing comforts to make you have a clear way between you and Heaven. So that heavenly gifts might come more plentifully to you. Bless God for chastening! Let the sweetest note of your music be to Him that lays not the rod aside, but like a father chastens His children for their good.

II. Now our time is gone, but you must even be detained, for it is necessary to dwell upon the last thought, which is THE INFERENCE FROM ALL THIS. All this humbling, feeding, clothing, strengthening, chastening—what of it all? Why this—“therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him.” If you have not shared in these blessings, I shall not speak with you, for the inference would not tell upon you.

But if in very deed and truth every line here describes to the letter your Christian career, then let these arguments have power with you. He has done thus much for you, will you not serve Him? Are you not His by a thousand bonds? Delivered out of deep distresses, supported under enormous burdens, forgiven heinous sins, saved with a great salvation—are you not now bound by every tie that can bind an honorable man to be obedient to the Lord your God? Take the model of the text. Let your obedience be universal. Keep the commandments of the Lord. Walk in His ways.

Set your heart to the Scriptures to find out what the Commandments are, and then, once knowing them, perform them at once. Settle it in your soul that you only want to know it is His will, and you will, by His Grace, neither question nor delay—but whatever He says unto you, you will do. Shut not your eyes to any part of His teaching. Be not willfully blind where Christ would guide you with His Word. Let your obedience be entire. In nothing be rebellious. Let that obedience be careful. Does not the text say, “Keep the commandments,” and does not the first verse say, “You shall observe to do”?

Keep it as though you kept a treasure, carefully putting your heart as a garrison round it. Observe it as they do who have some difficult art, and who watch each order of the teacher, and trace each different part of the process with observant eye, lest they fail in their art by missing any one little thing. Keep and observe. Be careful in your life. Be scrupulous. You serve a jealous God, be jealous of yourself. Let your obedience be practical. The text says, “Walk in His ways.” Carry your service of God into your daily life, into all the minutiae and details of it.

Do not have an unholy room in your house. Let the bedchamber, let the banqueting hall, let the place of conversation, the place of business—let every place be holiness unto your God. Walk in His ways. Whereas others walk up and down in the name of their god, and boast themselves in the idols wherein they trust, you walk in the name of Jehovah your God, and glory always to avow that you are a disciple of Jesus, God's dear Son—and let your obedience spring from principle, for the text says, “Walk in His ways, and fear Him.”

Seek to have a sense of His Presence, such as holy spirits have in Heaven who view Him face to face. Remember He is everywhere. You are never absent from that Eye. Tremble, therefore, before Him with that sacred trembling which is consistent with holy faith. Serve Him with faith

and trembling, knowing that be you who you may, He is infinite and you are finite. He is perfect and you are sinful, He is All in All and you are nothing at all. With this sacred, reverential, child-like fear pregnant within your spirit, you will be sure to walk practically in obedience to Him.

I close by saying, we who have followed God's Word so far, and experienced the faithfulness of God so long, ought never to give way to unbelief. Your foot has not swollen, your garment has not waxed old these forty years—why will you then mistrust or be suspicious? If He meant to deceive you He would have left you long ago—

***“He cannot have taught you
To trust in His name,
And thus far have brought you
To put you to shame.”***

Go on! The present difficulty will melt like the past. Go on! The future mercy will be as sure as the mercies that have up to now come to you. Though winds and waves go over your head, and friends vanish from you, “trust in the Lord, and do good, so shall you dwell in the land, and, verily, you shall be fed.” The heavens and the earth may pass away, and rocks turn to rivers, and the sun turn to a coal, but the eternal promise never shall fail, and the heart of infinite love shall never change. “Be of good comfort, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord.”

What encouragement all this gives to young Brethren who are setting out in the Christian life, or about to engage in the Christian ministry! With that reflection I close. If your fathers, and your fellow Christians of elder years can say that their bread has been given them, and their supplies have been all-sufficient, then rest assured, my Brethren, you are entering upon a happy life, even if it is a tried and difficult one. For the Lord who has dealt so well with some of His people, gives in that fact a pledge that He will deal so with all. Commit yourselves wholly to God. Give up all your powers to His service. Work for Him with all your hearts, and He will supply your needs.

Think not of this world's gain, but “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” Lay self in the dust, and let Christ be All in All. Live by the rule of Truth. Walk by the way of faith. Have confidence in God, and your path shall be as brightness, and your glory as a lamp that burns. Joined on earth to the hand of Christian soldiers, you shall, before long, be added to the countless host of the Church triumphant, who at this hour bear witness that God is faithful, and that His promise is sure.

O you who are not Believers, methinks your mouths must water this morning to come and join with God's Israel! And remember that simply believing on the Lord Jesus Christ will bring you to be numbered with Israel. If you will but with your hearts accept Christ to be your Savior, then His people shall be your people, His God shall be your God. Where He dwells and His people dwell, you shall dwell. And if for awhile you are buried with Him, you shall arise again to live forever with Him in Heaven. May the Holy Spirit seal this on your hearts. Amen.

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ELECTION AND HOLINESS

NO. 303

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 11, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“Behold, the Heaven and the Heaven of heavens is the Lord’s
your God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the
Lord had a delight in your fathers to love them, and
He chose their seed after them, even you above
all people, as it is this day.
Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your
heart and be no more stiff-necked.”
Deuteronomy 10:14, 15, 16.***

HE who preaches the whole Truth of God as it is in Jesus will labor under continual disadvantages—albeit that the grand *advantage* of having the presence and blessing of God will more than compensate the greatest loss. It has been my earnest endeavor ever since I have preached the Word, never to keep back a single doctrine which I believe to be taught of God. It is time that we had done with the old and rusty systems that have so long curbed the freeness of religious speech. The Arminian trembles to go an inch beyond Arminius or Wesley and many a Calvinist refers to John Gill or John Calvin, as the ultimate authority.

It is time that the systems were broken up and that there was sufficient grace in all our hearts to believe everything taught in God’s Word, whether it was taught by either of these men or not. I have frequently found when I have preached what is called high doctrine, because I found it in my text, that some people have been offended. They could not enjoy it, could not endure it and went away. They were generally people who were best gone. I have never regretted their absence.

On the other hand, when I have taken for my text some sweet invitation and have preached the freeness of Christ’s love to man. When I have warned sinners that they are responsible while they hear the Gospel and that if they reject Christ their blood will be upon their own heads, I find another class of doubtless excellent individuals who cannot see how these two things agree. And therefore, they also turn aside and wade into the deceptive miry bogs of Antinomianism. I can only say with regard to them, that I had rather also that they should go to their own sort, than that they should remain with my congregation.

We seek to hold the Truth of God. We know no difference between high doctrine and low doctrine. If God teaches it, it is enough. If it is not in the Word, away with it! Away with it! But if it is in the Word, agreeable or disagreeable, systematic or disorderly, I believe it. It may seem to us as if one Truth of God stands in opposition to another, but we are fully convinced

that it cannot be so, that it is a mistake in our judgment. That the two things do agree we are quite clear, though where they meet we do not know as yet, but hope to know hereafter. That God has a people whom He has chosen for Himself and who shall show forth His praise, we do believe to be a doctrine legible in the Word of God to every man who cares to read that Book with an honest and candid judgment.

That, at the same time, Christ is freely presented to every creature under Heaven and that the invitations and exhortations of the Gospel are honest and true invitations—not fictions or myths, not tantalizations and mockeries, but realities and facts—we do also unfeignedly believe. We subscribe to both Truths of God with our hearty assent and consent.

Now, this morning it may be that some of you will not approve of what I have to say. You will remember, however, that I do not seek your approbation—that it will be sufficient for me if I have cleared my conscience concerning a grand Truth of God and have preached the Gospel faithfully. I am not accountable to you, nor you to me. You are accountable to God, if you reject a Truth of His. I am accountable to Him if I preach an error. I am not afraid to stand before His bar with regard to the great doctrines which I shall preach to you this day.

Now, two things this morning. First, I shall attempt to set forth God's Election. Secondly, to show its practical bearings. You have both in the text, "Behold, the Heaven and the Heaven of heavens is the Lord's your God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in your fathers to love them and He chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day." And, then, in the second place, its practical bearings, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart and be no more stiff-necked."

I. In SETTING FORTH ELECTION, I must have you observe, first of all, its extraordinary singularity. God has chosen to Himself a people whom no man can number, out of the children of Adam—out of the fallen and apostate race who sprang from the loins of a rebellious man. Now, this is a wonder of wonders, when we come to consider that the Heaven, even the Heaven of heavens, is the Lord's. If God must have a chosen race, why did He not select one from the majestic orders of angels, or from the flaming cherubim and seraphim who stand around His Throne? Why was not Gabriel fixed upon? Why was he not so constituted that from his loins there might spring a mighty race of angels and why were not these chosen of God from before the foundations of the world?

What could there be in man, a creature lower than the angels, that God should select him rather than the angelic spirits? Why were not the cherubim and seraphim given to Christ? Why did He not take up angels? Why did He not assume their nature and take them into union with Himself? An angelic body might be more in keeping with the Person of Deity, than a body of weak and suffering flesh and blood. There were something congruous if He had said unto the angels, "You shall be My sons."

But, no! Though all these were His own, He passes by the hierarchy of angels and stoops to man. He takes up an apostate worm and says unto

him, "You shall be My son," and to myriads of the same race He cries, "you shall be My sons and daughters, by a Covenant forever." "But," says one, "It seems that God intended to choose a fallen people that He might in them show forth His grace. Now, the angels, of course, would be unsuitable for this, since they have not fallen." I reply, there are angels that have fallen. There were angels that kept not the first estate, but fell from their dignity. And how is it that these are consigned to blackness of darkness forever?

Answer me, you that deny God's sovereignty and hate His election—how is it that angels are condemned to everlasting fire, while to you, the children of Adam, the Gospel of Christ is freely preached? The only answer that can possibly be given is this—God wills to do it. He has a right to do as He pleases with His own mercy. Angels deserve no mercy—we deserve none. Nevertheless, He gave it to us and He denied it to them. They are bound in chains, reserved for everlasting fire to the last great day, but we are saved. Before Your sovereignty, I bow, great God and acknowledge that You do as You will and that You give no account of Your matters. Why, if there were any reason to move God in His creatures, He would certainly have chosen devils rather than men. The sin of the first of the fallen angels was not greater than that of Adam.

It is not the time to enter into that question. I could, if opportunity were needed, prove it to be rather less than greater, if there were degrees in sin. Had the angels been reclaimed, they could have glorified God more than we. They could have sang His praises louder than we can, clogged as we are with flesh and blood. But passing by the greater, He chose the less, that He might show forth His sovereignty, which is the brightest jewel in the crown of His Divinity. Our Arminian antagonists always leave the fallen angels out of the question—for it is not convenient to them to recollect this ancient instance of Election. They call it unjust, that God should choose one man and not another.

By what reasoning can this be unjust when they will admit that it was righteous enough in God to choose one race—the race of men and leave another race—the race of angels—to be sunk into misery on account of sin? Brethren, let us have done with arraighing God at our poor fallible judgment seat. He is good and does righteousness. Whatever He does we may know to be right, whether we can see the righteousness or not.

I have given you, then, some reasons at the start, why we should regard God's Election as being singular. But I have to offer to you others. Observe, the text not only says, "Behold, the Heaven, even the Heaven of the heavens is the Lord's," but it adds, "the earth also, with all that therein is." Now, when we think that God has chosen us, when you, my Brethren, who by grace have put your trust in Christ, read your "title clear to mansions in the skies," you may well pause and say in the language of that hymn—

***"Pause, my Soul I adore and wonder!
Ask, 'O why such love to me?'"***

Kings passed by and beggars chosen. Wise men left, but fools made to know the wonders of His redeeming love. Publicans and harlots sweetly compelled to come to the feast of mercy. Proud Pharisees suffered to trust in their own righteousness and perish in their vain boastings. God's choice will ever seem in the eyes of unrenewed men to be a very strange one. He has passed over those whom we should have selected and He has chosen just the odds and ends of the universe—the men who thought themselves the least likely ever to taste of His Grace. Why were we chosen as a people to have the privilege of the Gospel? Are there not other nations as great as we have been? Sinful a people as this English nation has manifested itself to be, why has God selected the Anglo-Saxon race to receive the pure Truth of God, while nations who might have received the light with even greater joy than ourselves, still lie shrouded in darkness and the sun of the Gospel has never risen on them? Why, again, I say, in the case of each *individual*, why is the man chosen who is chosen? Can any answer be given but just the answer of our Savior—"Even so, Father, for it seems good in Your sight"?

Yet one other thought, to make God's Election marvelous, indeed. God had unlimited power of creation. Now, if he willed to make a people who should be His favorites, who should be united to the Person of His Son and who should reign with Him, why did He not make a new race? When Adam sinned, it would have been easy enough to strike the world out of existence. He had but to speak and this round earth would have been dissolved, as the bubble dies into the wave that bears it. There would have been no trace of Adam's sin left, the whole might have died away and have been forgotten forever.

But no! Instead of making a new people, a pure people who could not sin—instead of taking to Himself creatures that were pure, unsullied, without spot—He takes a depraved and fallen people and lifts these up and that, too, by costly means—by the death of His own Son—by the work of His own Spirit. To think that these must be the jewels in His crown to reflect His glory forever, oh, singular choice! Oh, strange election, my soul is lost in Your depths and I can only pause and cry, "Oh, the goodness, oh, the mercy, oh, the sovereignty of God's Grace."

Having thus spoken about its singularity, I turn to another subject. Observe the unconstrained freeness of electing love. In our text this is hinted at by the word "ONLY." Why did God love their fathers? Why, only because He did so. There is no other reason. "Only, the Lord had a delight in your fathers to love them and He chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day." There was doubtless some wise reason for the Lord's acts, for He does all things after the counsel of His will, but there certainly could not be any reason in the excellence or virtue of the *creature* whom He chose.

Now, just dwell upon that for a moment. Let us remark that there is no original goodness in those whom God selects. What was there in Abraham that God chose him? He came out of an idolatrous people and it is said of his posterity—a Syrian ready to perish was your father. As if God would

show that it was not the goodness of Abraham, He says, "Look unto the rock from where you were hewn and to the hole of the pit from where you were dug. Look unto Abraham your father and unto Sarah that bare you—for I called him alone and blessed him and increased him." There was nothing more in Abraham than in any one of us why God should have selected him, for whatever good was in Abraham *God put there*.

Now, if God put it there, the motive for His putting it there could not be the fact of His putting it there. You cannot find a motive for a fact in itself—there must be some motive lying higher than anything which can be found in the mere act of God. If God chose a man to make that man holy, righteous and good—He cannot have chosen him because he was to be good and righteous. It were absurd to reason thus. It were drawing a cause for an effect and making an effect a cause. If I were to plead that the rose bud were the author of the root, well! I might, indeed, be laughed at.

But were I to urge that any goodness in man is the ground of God's choice, when I call to recollection that that goodness is the effect of God's choice, I should be foolish indeed. That which is the elect cannot be the cause. But what original good is there in any man? If God chose us for anything good in ourselves, we must all be left unchosen. Have we not all an evil heart of unbelief? Have we not all departed from His ways? Are we not all by nature corrupt, enemies to God by wicked works? If He chooses us it cannot be because of any original goodness in us. "But," says one, "perhaps it may be because of goodness foreseen. God has chosen His people, because He foresees that they will believe and be saved." A singular idea, indeed!

Here are a certain number of poor persons and a prince comes into the place. To some ninety out of the hundred he distributes gold. Some one asks the question, "Why did the prince give this gold to those ninety?" A madman in a corner, whose face ought never to be seen, replies, "He gave it to them because he foresaw that they would have it." But how could he foresee that they would have it apart from the fact that he gave it to them?

Now, you say that God gives faith, repentance, salvation, because He foresaw that men would have it. He did not foresee it apart from the fact that He intended to give it them. He foresaw that He would give them grace. But what was the reason that He gave it to them? Certainly, not *His* foresight. That were absurd, indeed! And none but a madman would reason thus.

Oh, Father, if You have given me life and light and joy and peace, the reason is known only to Yourself. For reasons in myself I never can find, for I am still a wanderer from You and often does my faith flicker and my love grow dim. There is nothing in me to merit esteem or give You delight. It is all by Your grace, Your grace alone that I am what I am. So will every Christian say. So *must* every Christian, indeed, confess.

But is it not all idle talk, even to controvert for a single moment, with the absurd idea that man can shackle his Maker? Shall the purpose of the Eternal be left contingent on the will of man? Shall man be really his

Maker's master? Shall free will take the place of the Divine energy? Shall man take the Throne of God and set aside as he pleases all the purposes of Jehovah—compelling Him by merit to choose him? Shall there be something that man can do that shall control the motions of Jehovah? It is said by someone that men give free will to everyone but God and speak as if God must be the slave of men.

Yes, we believe that God has given to man a free will—that we do not deny—but we will have it that God has a free will also—that, moreover, He has a right to exercise it and does exercise it. And that no merit of man can have any compulsion with the Creator. Merit, on the one hand, is impossible. And even if we did possess it, it could not be possible that we could possess it in such a degree as to merit the gift of Christ. Remember, if we *deserve* salvation, man must have virtue enough to merit Heaven, to merit union with Jesus, to merit, in fact, everlasting glory.

You go back to the old Romish idea, if you once slip your anchor and cut your cable and talk about anything in man that could have moved the mercy of God. "Well," says one, "this is vile Calvinism." Be it so, if you choose to call it so. Calvin found his doctrine in the Scriptures. Doubtless he may have also received some instruction from the works of Augustine, but that mighty doctor of grace learned it from the writings of St. Paul. And St. Paul, the Apostle of Grace, received it by inspiration from Jesus the Lord. We can trace our pedigree directly to Christ Himself. Therefore, we are not ashamed of any title that may be appended to a glorious Truth of God. Election is free and has nothing to do with any original goodness in man, or goodness foreseen, or any merit that man can possibly bring before God.

I come to the hardest part of my task this morning—Election in its justice. Now, I shall defend this great fact, that God has chosen men to Himself and I shall regard it from rather a different point of view from that which is usually taken. My defense is just this. You tell me, if God has chosen some men to eternal life, that He has been unjust. I ask you to prove it. The burden of the proof lies with you. For I would have you remember that none merited this at all. Is there one man in the whole world who would have the impertinence to say that he merits anything of his Maker?

If so, be it known unto you that he shall have all he merits. And his reward will be the flames of Hell forever, for that is the utmost that any man ever merited of God. God is in debt to no man and at the Last Great Day every man shall have as much love, as much pity and as much goodness, as he deserves. Even the lost in Hell shall have all they deserve, yes, and woe the day for them when they shall have the wrath of God, which will be the summit of their deservings. If God gives to every man as much as he merits, is He therefore to be accused of injustice because He gives to some infinitely more than they merit?

Where is the injustice of a man doing as he wills with his own? Has he not a right to give what he pleases? If God is in debt to any, then there would be injustice. But He is indebted to none and if He gives His favors

according to His own sovereign will, who is he that shall find fault? You have not been injured. God has not wronged you. Bring up your claims and He will fulfill them to the last jot. If you are righteous and can claim something of your Maker, stand up and plead your virtues and He will answer you.

Though you gird up your loins like a man and stand before Him and plead your own righteousness, He will make you tremble and abhor yourself and roll in dust and ashes. For your righteousness is a lie and your best performance but as filthy rags. God injures no man in blessing some. Strange is it that there should be any accusation brought against God, as though He were unjust.

I defend it again on another ground. To which of you has God ever refused His mercy and love, when you have sought His face? Has He not freely proclaimed the Gospel to you all? Does not His Word bid you come to Jesus? And does it not solemnly say, "Whosoever will, let him come"? Are you not every Sabbath invited to come and put your trust in Christ? If you will not do it, but will destroy your own souls, who is to blame? If you put your trust in Christ you shall be saved—God will not run back from His promise. Prove Him, try Him. The moment you renounce sin and trust in Christ, that moment you may know yourself to be one of His chosen ones. But if you will wickedly put from you the Gospel which is daily preached, if you will not be saved, then on your own head is your blood.

The only reason why you can be lost is because you would continue in sin and would not cry to be saved from there. You have rejected Him, you have put Him far from you and left to yourselves, you will not receive Him. "Well, but," says one, "I cannot come to God." Your powerlessness to come lies in the fact that you have no *will* to come. If you were but once willing you would lack no power. You can not come, because you are so wedded to your lusts, so fond of your sin. That is why you cannot come. That very inability of yours is your crime, your guilt. You could come if your love to evil and self were broken.

The inability lies not in your physical nature but in your depraved moral nature. Oh, if you were *willing* to be saved! There is the point—there is the point! You are not *willing*, nor will you ever be, till Grace *makes* you willing. But who is to blame because you are not willing to be saved? None but yourself. You have the whole blame. If you refuse eternal life, if you will not look to Christ, if you will not trust to Him, remember your own will damns you. Was there ever a man who had a sincere will to be saved in God's way who was denied salvation? No, no, a thousand times NO, for such a man is already taught of God. He who gives will, will not deny power. Inability lies mainly in the will. When once a man is made willing in the day of God's power, he is made *able* also. Therefore, your destruction lies at your own door.

Then let me ask another question. You say it is unjust that some should be lost while others are saved. Who makes those to be lost that are lost? Did God cause you to sin? Has the Spirit of God ever persuaded you to do a wrong thing? Has the Word of God ever bolstered you up in your

own self-righteousness? No. God has never exercised any influence upon you to make you go the wrong way. The whole tendency of His Word, the whole tendency of the preaching of the Gospel, is to persuade you to turn from sin unto righteousness, from your wicked ways to Jehovah.

I say again, God is just. If you reject the Savior proclaimed to you, if you refuse to trust Him, if you will not come to Him and be saved, you are lost. God is supremely just in your being lost, but if He chooses to exert the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon some of you, He is surely just in giving the mercy which no man can claim and so just that through eternal ages there shall never be found anything new in His acts but the "Holy, Holy, Holy." God shall be hymned by the redeemed and by cherubim and seraphim, and even the lost in Hell shall be compelled to utter an involuntary bass to that dread song, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth."

Having thus tried to defend the justice of Election, I now turn to notice the truth of it. I may possibly have here some godly men who cannot receive this doctrine. Well, my Friend, I am not angry with you for not being able to receive it, because no man can receive it unless it is given him from God. No Christian will ever rejoice in it unless he has been taught of the Spirit. But, after all, my Brother, if you are a renewed man, you believe it. You are coming upstairs to argue with me. Come along and I will allow you to argue with yourself and before five minutes have passed you will out of your own mouth prove my point. Come, my dear Brother, you do not believe that God can justly give to some men more grace than to others.

Very well. Let us kneel down and pray together. And you shall pray first. You no sooner begin to pray than you say, "O Lord, be pleased, in your infinite mercy, to send Your Holy Spirit to save this congregation and be pleased to bless my relatives according to the flesh." Stop! Stop! You are asking God to do something which, according to your theory, is not right. You are asking Him to give them more grace than they have got. You are asking Him to do something special. Positively, you are pleading with God that He would give grace to your relatives and friends and to this congregation. How do you make that to be right in your theory?

If it would be unjust in God to give more grace to one man than to another, how very unjust of you to ask Him to do it! If it is all left to man's free will why do you beg the Lord to interfere? You cry, "Lord, draw them Lord, break their hearts, renew their spirits." Now, I very heartily use this prayer, but how can *you* do it, if you think it unrighteous in the Lord to endow this people with more grace than He does the rest of the human race? "Oh," but you say, "I feel that it is right and I will ask Him."

Very well, then, if it is right in you to ask, it must be right in Him to give. It must be right in Him to give mercy to men and to some men such mercy that they may be constrained to be saved. You have thus proved my point and I do not want a better proof. And now, my Brother, we will have a song together and we will see how we can get on there. Open your hymn book and you sing in the language of your Wesleyan hymnbook—

**“Oh, yes, I do love Jesus
Because He first loved me.”**

There, Brother, that is Calvinism. You have let it out again. You love Jesus because He first loved you. Well, how is it *you* come to love Him while others are left not loving Him?

Is that to your honor or to His honor? You say, “It is to the praise of Grace. Let Grace have the praise.” Very well, Brother. We shall get on very well, after all, for, although we may not agree in preaching, yet we agree, you see, in praying and praising. Preaching a few months ago in the midst of a large congregation of Methodists, the Brethren were all alive, giving all kinds of answers to my sermon, nodding their heads and crying, “Amen!” “Hallelujah,” “Glory be to God!” and the like. They completely woke me up. My spirit was stirred and I preached away with an unusual force and vigor. And the more I preached the more they cried, “Amen!” “Hallelujah,” “Glory be to God!”

At last, a part of the text led me to what is styled high doctrine. So I said, this brings me to the doctrine of Election. There was a deep drawing of breath. “Now, my Friends, you believe it,” said I. They seemed to say. “No, we don’t.” But you do and I will make you sing “Hallelujah,” over it. I will so preach it to you that you will acknowledge it and believe it. So I put it thus—Is there no difference between you and other men? “Yes, yes; glory be to God, glory!” There is a difference between what you were and what you are now? “Oh, yes! Oh, yes!” There is sitting by your side a man who has been to the same Chapel as you have, heard the same Gospel, he is unconverted and you are converted. Who has made the difference, yourself or God? “The Lord!” said they, “the Lord! Glory! Hallelujah,” Yes, cried I and that is the doctrine of Election!

That is all I contend for, that if there is a difference the Lord made the difference. Some good man came up to me and said, “You are right, lad! You are right. I believe your doctrine of Election. I do not believe it as it is preached by some people, but I believe that we must give the glory to God, we must put the crown on the right head.” After all, there is an instinct in every Christian heart, that makes him receive the substance of this doctrine, even if he will not receive it in the peculiar form in which we put it. That is enough for me.

I do not care about the words or the phraseology, or the form of creed in which I may be in the habit of stating the doctrine. I do not want you to subscribe to my creed, but I do want you to subscribe to a creed that gives God the glory of His salvation. Every saint in Heaven sings, “Grace has done it.” And I want every saint on earth to sing the same song, “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, to Him be the glory forever and ever.” The prayers, the praises, the experience of those who do not believe this doctrine prove the doctrine better than anything I can say. I do not care to prove it better and I leave it as it is.

II. We now turn to ELECTION IN ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCES. You will see that the precept is annexed to the doctrine—God has loved you above all people that are upon the face of the earth, therefore, “circumcise

the foreskin of your hearts and be no more stiff-necked.” It is whispered that Election is a licentious doctrine. Say it out loud and then I will answer you. Election is a licentious doctrine? How do you prove it? It is my business to prove to you that it is the very reverse. “Well but,” cries one, “I know a man that believes in Election and yet lives in sin.”

Yes and I suppose *that* disproves it? So that if I can go through London and find any ragged drunken fellow, who believes a doctrine and lives in sin, the fact of his believing it disproves it? Singular logic, that! I will undertake to disprove any truth in the world if you only give me *that* to be my rule.

Why, I can bring up some filthy, scurvy creature, that doubts the universal bounty of God. Then, I suppose that will disprove it? I might bring up to you some wretch that is lying in sin, who yet believes that if he were to cry “Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner,” from his heart, he would be saved, even though he was on his dying bed. I suppose his believing that, disproves it—does it? No! You know very well, though you use such logic as that against us, you would not use it against yourself. The fact is, that the bad lives or the good lives of some individuals cannot be taken as a proof either *for* or *against* any set of doctrines.

There are holy men that are mistaken. There are unholy men who receive truth. That may be seen any day by any man who will candidly make the observation. If, however, any one sect were peculiarly full of ungodly professors and hypocrites, *then* would I admit the force of your argument. But I defy you to the proof. The men that have believed this doctrine have been the wide world over—though perhaps, it is not my place to say it, except that I will glory in it as Paul did—have been the most zealous, most earnest, most holy men. Remember, Sirs, you that scoff at this doctrine, that you owe your liberties to men who held it.

Who carved out for England its liberties? I do not hesitate to give the palm to the strong arms of the Ironsides and the mighty will of Oliver Cromwell. But what made them dash to battle as they did but a firm belief that they were God’s chosen ones and could sweep everything before them, because the Lord their God was with them? It was said in Charles the Second’s time that if you wanted to find believers in Arminianism, you could find them in every pot-house. But if you wanted to find those who believed the doctrine of grace you must go into the dungeons where the saints of God were shut up, because of the rigidity of their lives and the peculiar straitness of their conversation.

Never were men more heavenly-minded than the Puritans. And what Puritan can you find that holds any other doctrine than that which I preach today? You may find some modern doctor who teaches the reverse, but march through centuries and with few exceptions, where are the saints who denied the Election of God? The banner has been passed from one hand to the other. Martyrs died for it! they sealed the Truth of God with their blood. And this Truth of God shall stand when rolling years shall cease to move. This Truth of God which shall be believed when every error and superstition shall crumble to the dust from which they sprang.

But I come back to my proof. It is laid down as a matter of theory that this doctrine is licentious. We oppose that theory. The fitness of things proves that it is not so. Election teaches that God has chosen some to be kings and priests to God. When a man believes that he is chosen to be a king, would it be a legitimate inference to draw from it—"I am chosen to be a king, therefore I will be a beggar. I am chosen to sit upon a throne, therefore I will wear rags"? Why, you would say, "There would be no argument, no sense in it."

But there is quite as much sense in that as in *your* supposition—that God has chosen His people to be holy and yet that a knowledge of this fact will make them unholy. No! The man, knowing that a peculiar dignity has been put upon him by God, feels working in his bosom a desire to live up to his dignity. "God has loved me more than others," says he—"then, will I love Him more than others. He has put me above the rest of mankind by His Sovereign Grace, let me live above them—let me be more holy—let me be more eminent in grace than any of them."

If there is a man that can misuse the dignity of grace which Christ has given him and pervert that into an argument for licentiousness, he is not to be found among us. He must be something less than man, fallen though man be, who would infer, from the fact that he has become a Son of God by God's free grace, that therefore he ought to live like a son of the devil. Or, who should say, "Because God has ordained me to be holy, therefore I will be unholy." That were the strangest, oddest, most perverted, most abominable reasoning that ever could be used. I do not believe there is a creature living that could be capable of using it.

Again—not only the fitness of things, but the thing itself proves that it is not so. Election is a separation. God has set apart him that is godly for Himself, has separated a people out of the mass of mankind. Does that separation allow us to draw the inference thus—"God has separated me, therefore, I will live as other men live." No! If I believe that God has distinguished me by His discriminating love and separated me, then I hear the cry, "Come out from among them and be you separate and touch not the unclean thing and I will be a Father unto you." It were strange if the decree of separation should engender an unholy union. It cannot be.

I deny, once and for all in the name of all who hold the Truth of God—I deny solemnly, as in the presence of God, that we have any thought that because God has separated us, therefore we ought to go and live as others live. No, God forbid! Our separation is a ground and motive for our separating altogether from sinners. I heard a man say once, "Sir, if I believed that doctrine I should live in sin." My reply to him was this, "I dare say YOU would! I dare say YOU would!" "And why," said he, "should I more than you?"

Simply because you are a man and I trust I am a new man in Christ Jesus. To man that is renewed by grace, there is no doctrine that could make him love sin. If a man by nature is as a swine that wallows in the mire, turn him into a sheep and there is NO doctrine you can teach that can make him go and wallow in the mire again. His nature is changed.

There is a raven transformed into a dove. I will give the dove to you and you may teach it whatever you like, but that dove will not eat carrion any more. It cannot endure it—its nature is entirely changed. Here is a lion roaring for its prey. I will change it into a lamb. And I defy you to make that lamb, by any doctrine, go and redden its lips with blood. It cannot do it—its nature is changed.

A friend on board the steamboat, when we were coming across from Ireland, asked one of the sailors, “Would you like a risqué song?” “No,” said he, “I do not like such things.” “Would you like a dance?” “No,” said he, “I have a religion that allows me to swear and be drunk as often as ever I please and that is never—for I hate all such things with perfect hatred.” Christian men keep from sin because their nature abhors sin. Do not imagine we are kept back from sin because we are terrified with threats of damnation. We have no fear, except the fear of offending our loving Father

we do not want to sin—our thirst is for holiness and not for vice. But if you have a kind of religion that always keeps you in restraint, so that you say, “I should like to go to the theater tonight if I dare”—if that is what *you* say, depend upon it, your religion is not of much value. You must have a religion that makes you hate the things you once loved and love that which you once hated—a religion that draws you out of your old life and puts you into a new life. Now, if a man has a new nature, what doctrine of Election can make that new nature act contrary to its instincts? Teach the man what you will, that man will not turn again to vanity. The Election of God gives a new nature—so, even if the doctrine were dangerous, the new nature would keep it in check.

But once more, bring me here the madman—shall I call him?—bring me the beast or devil that would say, “God has set His love upon me from before all worlds. My name is on Jesus’ heart. He bought me with His blood. My sins are all forgiven. I shall see God’s face with joy and acceptance, therefore, I hate God, therefore I live in sin.” Bring me up the monster, I say, and when you have brought up the fool, even then I will not admit that there is reason in that vile lie, that damnable calumny, which you have cast upon this doctrine—that it makes men live in licentiousness.

There is no Truth of God that can so nerve a man to piety as the fact that he was chosen of God before time began. Loved by You with an unlimited love that never moves and that endures to the end—O my God! I desire to spend myself in Your service—

**“Love, so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all,”**

and gratitude to God, for this rich mercy constrains us, compels us to walk in the fear of God and to love and serve Him all our lives.

Now, two lessons and then I will send you away. The first lesson is this—Christian Brothers and Sisters—chosen of God and ordained unto salvation—remember that this is a doctrine everywhere spoken *against*. Do not hide it, do not conceal it—for remember, Christ has said, “He that is ashamed of my words, of him will I be ashamed.” But take care that you

do not dishonor it. Be you holy, even as he is holy. He has called you—stand by your calling—give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Put on, as the elect of God, hearts of compassion, holiness and love and let the world see that God's chosen ones are made by grace the choicest of men, who live nearer to Christ and are more like Christ, than any other people upon the face of the earth.

And let me add, if the world sneers at you, you can look your enemy in the face and never tremble. For this is a degree of nobility, a patent of Divine dignity for which you never need blush but which will keep you from ever being a coward, or bowing your knee before pomp and station, when they are associated with vice. This doctrine has never been liked because it is a hammer against tyrants. Men have chosen their own elect ones, their kings, dukes and earls and God's election interferes with them.

There are some that will not bow the knee to Baal, who hold themselves to be God's true aristocracy, who will not resign their consciences to the dictation of another. Men rail and rave and rage because this doctrine makes a good man strong in his loins and will not let him bend his knee, or turn back and be a coward. Those Ironsides were made mighty because they held themselves to be no mean men. They bowed before God, but before men they could not and would not bow. Stand fast, therefore, in this your liberty and be not moved from the hope of your calling.

One other word of exhortation—it is the second lesson. There are some of you who are making an excuse out of the doctrine of Election—an excuse, an apology for your own unbelieving and wicked hearts. Now remember the doctrine of Election exercises no constraint whatever upon you. If you are wicked you are so because you will be so. If you reject the Savior you do so because you will do so. The doctrine does not make you reject Him. You may make it an excuse, but it is an idle one. It is a cobweb garment that will be rent away at the last day. I beseech you lay it aside and remember that the Truth of God which you have to do is this, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." If you believe, you are saved.

If you trust Christ, be you who you may, or what you may, the wide world over, you are a saved man. Do not say, "I will not believe because I do not know whether I am elected." You cannot know that until you have believed. Your business is with believing. "Whosoever"—there is no limitation in it—"Whosoever believes in Christ shall be saved." You, as well as any other man. If you trust Christ, your sins shall be forgiven, your iniquities blotted out. O may the Holy Spirit breathe the new life into you. Bowing the knee, I beseech you, kiss the Son lest He be angry. Receive His mercy now, steel not your hearts against the gracious influence of His love. Yield to Him and you shall then find that you yielded because He made you yield—that you came to Him because He drew you. And that He drew you because He had loved you with an everlasting love.

May God command His blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

CANAAN ON EARTH

NO. 58

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 30, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

For the land which you go to possess is not as the land of Egypt, from where you came out, where you sowed your seed and watered it with your foot, as a garden of herbs. But the land where you go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys and drinks water of the rain of Heaven. A land which the Lord your God cares for. The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year, even unto the end of the year.”
Deuteronomy 11:10, 11, 12.

IT has generally been considered that the passage of the Jordan by the Israelites is typical of death and that Canaan is a fitting representation of Heaven. We believe that in some sense it is true and we do fondly cherish the household words of those hymns which describe our passing through Jordan's billows and landing safely on Canaan's side. But we think that the allegory does not hold—that Jordan is not a fair exhibition of death—nor the land of Canaan a fair picture of the sweet land beyond the swelling flood which the Christian gains after death. For mark you—after the children of Israel had entered into Canaan, they had to fight with their enemies. It was a land filled with foes! Every city they entered, they had to take by storm, unless a miracle dismantled it. They were warriors, even in the land of Canaan, fighting for their own inheritance. And though each tribe had its lot marked out, they had to conquer the giant Anakim and encounter terrible hosts of Canaanites. But when we cross the river of death, we shall have no foes to fight, no enemies to encounter. Heaven is a place already prepared for us. Out of it the evil ones have long ago been driven. There Brethren shall await us with pleasing faces, kind hands shall clasp ours and only loving words shall be heard. The shout of war shall never be raised by us in Heaven! We shall throw our swords away and the scabbards with them. No battles with warriors, there! No plains soaked with blood, no hills where robbers dwell, no inhabitants with chariots of iron. It is “a land flowing with milk and honey.” And it dreams not of the foeman of Canaan of old. We think the Church has lost the beauty of Scripture, in taking Jordan to mean death—and that a far fuller meaning is the true allegory to be connected with it. Egypt, as we have lately observed to you, was typical of the condi-

tion of the children of God while they are in bondage to the law of sin. There they are made to work unceasingly, without wages or profit, but continually subject to pains. We said, again, that the coming up out of Egypt was the type of the deliverance which every one of God's people enjoys, when, by faith, he strikes the blood of Jesus on his lintel and his doorpost and spiritually eats the Paschal Lamb. And we can also tell you, now, that the passage through the wilderness is typical of that state of hoping, fearing, doubting, wavering, inconstancy and distrust which we usually experience between the period when we come out of Egypt and attain unto the full assurance of faith.

Many of you, my dear Hearers, have really come out of Egypt. But you are still wandering about in the wilderness. "We that have believed do enter into rest." But you, though you have eaten of Jesus, have not so believed on Him as to have entered into the Canaan of rest. You are the Lord's people, but you have not come into the Canaan of assured faith, confidence and hope, where we wrestle no longer with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers *in the heavenly places* in Christ Jesus. You have not come to that place where it is no longer a matter of doubt with us whether we shall be saved, but we feel that we *are* saved! I have known Believers who have existed for years with almost no doubt as to their acceptance. They have enjoyed a sweet and blessed reliance on Christ! They have come into Canaan. They have fed on the good old corn of the land. They now "lie passive in His hands and know no will but His." They have such a sweet oneness with their blessed Lord Jesus that they lay their head on His breast all day long! They have scarcely any nights—they almost always live in days, for though they have not attained unto His perfect image—they feel themselves so manifestly in union with Him that they cannot and dare not doubt! They have entered into rest. They have come into Canaan. Such is the condition of the child of God when he has come to an advanced stage in his experience, when God has so given him Grace upon Grace that he can say, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

We will read this passage again and bear in mind what I understand it to mean. It sets before us the Christian's state *after* he has attained to this faith and confidence in God—when he is no longer careful about the things of this life, when he does not water the ground with his foot, but has come to a land that drinks in the rain of Heaven. "The land where you go in to possess it"—the land of high and holy Christian privilege—"is not as the land of Egypt, from where you came out, where you sowed your seed and watered it with your foot, as a garden of herbs. But the

land where you go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys and drinks water of the rain of Heaven. A land which the Lord your God cares for. The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.” We shall have, this morning, to note, first of all, *the difference between the Christian’s temporal condition and that of the Egyptian worldling*. And secondly, *the special privilege granted to those who have entered into Canaan*—that the eyes of the Lord their God are always upon their land, “from the beginning of the year, even unto the end of the year.”

I. True religion makes a difference not only in a man, but in a man’s condition. It affects not only his heart, but his state—not only his nature, but his very standing in society! The Lord your God cares not only for Israel, but for Canaan, where Israel dwells. God has not only a regard to the elect, but to their habitation and not only so, but to all their affairs and circumstances. The moment I become a child of God, not only is my heart changed and my nature renewed, but my very position becomes different. The very beasts of the field are in league with me and the stones, there, are at peace! My habitation is now guarded by Jehovah! My position in this world is no longer that of a needy mendicant—I have become a gentleman-pensioner on the Providence of God! My position, which was that of a bond slave in Egypt, is now become that of an inheritor in Canaan! In this difference of the condition of the Christian and the worldling, we shall mark three things.

First, *the Christian’s temporal condition is different to that of the worldling*. The worldling looks to secondary causes—the Christian looks to Heaven. He gets his mercies there. Read the text—“The land which you go to possess is not as the land of Egypt, from where you came out, where you sowed your seed and watered it with your foot, as a garden of herbs.” The land of Egypt has never had any rain from Heaven—tit has been always watered from earthly sources. At a certain season, the river Nile overflowed its banks and covered the land. A stock of water was then accumulated in artificial reservoirs and afterwards let out in canals and allowed to run in little trenches through the fields. They had to water it as a garden of herbs. All their dependence was on the nether springs. They looked to the river Nile as the source of all their plenty and even worshipped it. But the land to which you are coming is not watered from a river—“it drinks water of the rain of Heaven.” Your fertility shall not come from such artificial sources as canals and trenches. You shall be fed from the water that descends from Heaven! You see how beautifully this pictures a worldling and a Christian? Look at the worldling. What is his dependence? It is all upon the water below—he looks only to the water

that flows from the river of this world. “Who will show us any good?” Some rely upon what they call *chance*—(a river, the source of which, like the source of the Nile, is never known) and though continually disappointed, they still persevere in trusting to this unknown stream. Others, who are more sensible, trust to their hard work and honesty. They look to the source of that river and they trace it to a fountain of human erection, graced by a statue of labor. Ah, that river may yet fail you! It may not overflow its banks and you may be starved. But, O Christian, what do you rely upon? Your land “drinks water of the rain of Heaven.” Your mercies come not from the hand of chance! Your daily bread comes not so much from your industry as from your heavenly Father’s care! You see stamped upon every mercy, Heaven’s own inscription and every blessing comes down to you perfumed with the ointment and the spikenard and the myrrh of the ivory palaces from where God dispenses His bounties! Here is the difference between the assured Christian and the mere worldling—the one trusts to natural causes—the other “looks through Nature up to Nature’s God.” He sees his mercies as coming down fresh from Heaven!

Beloved, let us improve on this thought by showing you the great value of it. Do you know a man who sees his mercies coming from Heaven and not from earth? How much sweeter all his mercies are! There is nothing in the world that tastes as sweet to the schoolboy as that which comes from home. Those who live at the school may make him ever such good things, but he cares nothing for anything like that which comes from home! So with the Christian. All his mercies are sweeter because they are home mercies. I love God’s favors on earth. For everything I eat and drink tastes of home. And oh, how sweet to think, “That bread, my Father’s hand molded. That water, my Father drops out from His hand in the gentle rain.” I can see everything coming from His hand! The land in which I live is not like the land of Egypt, fed by a river, but it “drinks water of the rain of Heaven.” All my mercies come from above. Don’t you like, Beloved, to see the print of your Father’s fingers on every mercy? You have heard of the haddock having the mark of the thumb of Peter on it! It is a fiction, of course, but I am sure all the fish that we get out of the sea of Providence are marked by Jesus’ fingers. Happy the lot of that man who receives everything as coming from God and thanks his Father for it all! It makes anything sweet, when he knows it comes from Heaven! This thought, again, has a great tendency to keep us from an overwhelming love of the world. If we think that all our mercies come from Heaven, we shall not be so likely to love the world, as we shall be if we think that they are the natural products of the soil. The spies went to Eschol and

fetches an immense cluster of the grapes which grew there. But you do not find that the people said, “These are fine fruits, therefore will we stay here.” No—they saw that the grapes came from Canaan and, therefore, they said, “Let us go on and possess them.” And so, when we get rich mercies, if we think they come from the natural soil of this earth, we feel—

“Here I will forever stay.”

But if we know that they come from a foreign clime, we are anxious to go—

**“Where our dear Lord, His vineyard keeps,
And all the clusters grow.”**

Then, Christian, rejoice, rejoice! Your mercies come from Heaven! However small they are, still they are your Father’s gifts. Not one comes to you without His knowledge and His permission. Bless the Lord, therefore, that you have come to Canaan—where your “land drinks water of the rain of Heaven”!

My dearly Beloved, just stop here and console yourselves, if you are in trouble. “Oh,” says one, “I know not what I shall do—where to turn myself I cannot tell.” You are not like your Brother, who is sitting near you. He has a competency. He has a river of Egypt to depend on, you have not any. Nevertheless, there is still the sky. If you were to tell a farmer, “You have no rivers to water your lands.” “Well,” he would say, “I don’t need them, either, for I have clouds up there and the clouds are enough.” So, Christian, if you have nothing to depend on down below, turn your eyes up there and say, “The land which I go into possess, is not as the land of Egypt, from where I came out, where I sowed my seed and watered it with my foot, as a garden of herbs. But the land, where I go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys and drinks water of the rain of Heaven.”

1. Now comes the second distinction and that is, *a difference in the toilsomeness of their lives*. The worldly man, just like the Israelites in Egypt, has to water his land with his foot. Read the passage—“For the land which you go to possess, is not as the land of Egypt, from where you came out, where you sowed your seed and watered it with your foot as a garden of herbs.” This alludes, possibly, to the practice among all eastern nations where the land is irrigated, of letting out a certain quantity of water into a trench and then having small gutters dug in the gardens, to compel the water to run along different parts of the ground. Sometimes one of these gutters might be broken. And then the gardener would press the mold against it with his foot, to keep the water in its proper channel. But I am inclined to think that the passage alludes to the method which those Eastern countries have of pumping up the water by a tread wheel and so watering the land with their foot. However that may be, it means

that the land of Egypt was watered with extraordinary labor in order to preserve it from sterility! “But,” said Moses, “The land to which you are going is not a land which you will have to water with your foot. The water will come spontaneously. The land will be watered by the rain of Heaven. You can sit in your own houses, or under your own vine, or under your own fig tree and God, Himself, shall be your Irrigator! You shall sit still and ‘in quietness shall you possess your souls.’ Now, here is a difference between the godly and ungodly—*the ungodly man toils*. Suppose his objective is ambition—he will labor and labor and labor and spend his very life until he obtains the desired pinnacle. Suppose it is wealth—how will he emaciate his frame, rob his body of its needed sleep and take away the nourishment his frame requires—in order that he may accumulate riches! And if it is learning, how will he burn his eyes out with the flame of his hot desire, that he may understand all knowledge! How will he allow his frame to become weak and weary and thin, by midnight watching, till the oil with which he lights himself by night comes from his own flesh and the marrow of his bones furnishes the light for his spirit! Men will, in this way, labor and toil and strive! But not so the Christian. No—God “gives His beloved sleep.” His “strength is to sit still.” He knows what it is to fulfill the command of Paul—“I would have you without carefulness.” We can take things as God gives them, without all this toil and labor.

I have often admired the advice of old Cineasto Pyrrhus. An old story says that when Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, was making preparation for his intended expedition into Italy, Cineas, the philosopher, took a favorable opportunity of addressing him thus—“The Romans, Sir, are reported to be a warlike and victorious people. But if God permits us to overcome them, what use shall we make of the victory?” “You ask,” said Pyrrhus, “a thing that is self-evident. The Romans once conquered, no city will resist us! We shall then be masters of all Italy.” Cineas added—“And having subdued Italy, what shall we do next?” Pyrrhus, not yet aware of his intentions, replied, “Sicily next stretches out her arms to receive us.” “That is very probable,” said Cineas, “but will the possession of Sicily put an end to the war?” “God grant us success in that,” answered Pyrrhus, “and we shall make these only the forerunners of greater things, for then Libya and Carthage will soon be ours—and these things being completed, none of our enemies can offer any further resistance.” “Very true,” added Cineas, “for then we may easily regain Macedon and make absolute conquest of Greece. And when all these are in our possession, what shall we do, then?” Pyrrhus, smiling, answered, “Why then, my dear Friend, we will live at our ease, take pleasure all day and amuse ourselves with

cheerful conversation.” “Well Sir,” said Cineas, “and why may we not do this, now, and without the labor and hazard of an enterprise so laborious and uncertain?”

So, Beloved, says the Christian! The worldly man says, “Let me go and do this. Let me go and do that. Let me accumulate so many thousand pounds. Let me get so rich. Then I will enjoy myself and take my ease.” “No, says the Christian, “I see no reason for doing it. Why should I not make God my refuge *now*? Why should I not enjoy comfort and peace and make myself happy *now*?” He does not want to water his land with his feet! He sits down quietly and his land “drinks in water of the rain of Heaven.” Do not say I am preaching laziness! No such thing. I am only saying it is vain for you to rise up early and sit up late and eat the bread of carefulness, for, “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it.” But if, “He gives His beloved sleep,” they rest in Him. They know not these toils. That is, if they have attained to full assurance and crossed into the Canaan of full confidence in God. They do not care to go ranging the world to find their happiness. They say, “God is my ever-present help. In Him my soul is satisfied.” They rest content in Him. Their land is watered with the rain of Heaven!

I remember a story of a young man who was a lawyer. In order to attain fame in his position, he was extremely anxious to understand all the mysteries and tortuous windings of the law and to acquire some power of oratory, so that he might be able to deliver himself eloquently before the bench. For ten years he lived apart from other people, lest domestic habits should wean him from his studies. He wrapped himself every night in a blanket and took one of his own volumes and put it under his head. He denied himself food, eating only so many morsels a day, lest indigestion should impair his powers. Although he was an infidel, he believed in God—and he bowed his head so many times a day and prayed that he might lose anything rather than his intellectual powers. “Make a giant of me!” That was his expression. And although his poor mother begged him to make himself more comfortable, he would not, but persisted in his course of moderation and self-denial. One day, in reading one of his books, he saw this passage—“When all is gained, how little then is won! And yet to gain that little, how much is lost!” He stamped his foot and raved like a maniac at the thought, that he had spent all these ten years toiling and wearying himself for nothing! He saw the vanity of his course. He was driven to desperation, seized his axe, cut down the sign-board of his profession and said, “Here ends this business.” Turning to the same book, he found that it recommended Christianity as the rest of the weary soul. He found it in Christ and attained to such an understanding of

Christ that he became a preacher of the Gospel and might well have preached on this text—“The land which you go to possess is not as the land of Egypt, from where you came out, where you sowed your seed and watered it with your foot, as a garden of herbs. But the land which you go to possess is a land of hills and valleys and drinks water of the rain of Heaven. A land which the Lord your God cares for. The eyes of the Lord your God are upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year”

2. This brings us to the third and last difference that we will note this morning. And that is that the unbeliever—he who has not crossed the Jordan and come to full confidence—*does not understand the universality of God’s Providence*, while the assured Christian does. You will see that in my text in a minute. In Egypt the ground is almost entirely flat. And where it is not flat, it is impossible, of course, to grow anything unless the ground is watered at considerable difficulty by some method of artificial irrigation, which shall force the water onto the high places. “But,” says Moses, “the land which you go to possess is a land of hills and valleys.” The Egyptians could not get the water up on the hills, but you can. For the mountains drink in the rain, as well as the valleys! Now look at a worldling. Give him comforts, give him prosperity. He can be so happy. Give him everything just as he likes it—make his course all a plain, all a dead valley and a flat. He can fertilize that and water it. But let him have a mountainous trouble—let him lose a friend, or let his property be taken from him—put a hill in his way and he cannot water that with all the pumping of his feet and all the force he strives to use! But the Christian lives in “a land of hills and valleys.” A land of sorrow as well as joys. And the hills drink the water, as well as the valleys! We need not climb the mountains to water their heads, for our God is as high as the hills. High as our troubles and mountainous as are our difficulties, sometimes, we need not climb up with weary feet to make them fertile, for they are all made to work together for our good! Go on, Egyptian! Live in your flat country and enjoy its luxuries—you have your papyrus and you write mercies upon it—but it shall be the food of worms! We have no lotus, but we have a flower that blooms in Paradise. And we write our mercies on rocks and not on rushes. Oh, sweet Canaan, heavenly land where I dwell and where you dwell, my Brother and Sister Christians—a land which “drinks water of the rain of Heaven!”

II. We must consider, a little time, THE SPECIAL MERCY. “The eyes of the Lord are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.” We must now altogether turn away from the allegory and come to this special mercy, which is the lot only of God’s people.

“The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year”—that is, upon the lot of all Christians *individually*. We have come now, Beloved, to the end of another year—to the threshold of another period of time—and have marched another year’s journey through the wilderness. Come, now! In reading this verse over, can you say, Amen, to it? “The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon you, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.” Some of you say, “I have had deep troubles this year.” “I have lost a friend,” says one. “Ah,” says another, “I have been impoverished this year.” “I have been slandered,” cries another. “I have been exceedingly vexed and grieved,” says another. “I have been persecuted,” says another. But, Beloved, take the year altogether—the blacks and the whites, the troubles and the joys, the hills and the valleys all together and what have you to say about it? You may say, “Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Do not pick out one day in the year and say it was a bad day, but take all the year round! Let it revolve in all its grandeur. Let all the signs of the Zodiac come before you. Do not say, “I have been in Cancer a long time,” but run through them all and then get into Libra and judge between things that differ. And then what will you say? “Ah, bless the Lord! He has done all things well. My soul and all that is within me, bless His holy name!” And you know why all things have been well? It is because the eyes of the Lord have been upon you all the year! Oh, if those awful eyes had been shut for a single moment, by night or day, where would we have been? Why, we had not been at all, but swept away, like airy dreams, into annihilation! God watches over every one of His people, just as if there were only that one in the world. And He has been watching over you, so that when a trouble came, God said, “Trouble, Avaunt!” “There shall no temptation happen to you but such as is common to man.” And when your joys would have satiated upon you and around you, God has said, “Stand back, joy! I will not have you fondle him too much. He will be deceived by you.” “The eyes of the Lord have been upon you continually, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.” “Well,” says one, “I cannot say so much of my year.” Then I cannot say so much of you. I was speaking to the Christian. And if you cannot say of your year, “surely goodness and mercy have followed it all,” I am afraid you are not a child of God, for I think a child of God will say, when he reviews it all, “not one good thing has failed of all the Lord God has promised, but all has come to pass.”

Then, my Brethren, might I not say a word to you concerning *the eyes of the Lord having been upon us as a Church?* Ought we to let this year

pass without rehearsing the works of the Lord? Has He not been with us, exceedingly abundant and prospered us? It is during this year that we met together in the great assembly—during this year that these eyes have seen the mighty gatherings of men who listened to our words on the Sabbath. We shall not soon forget our sojourn in Exeter Hall, shall we? During those months, the Lord brought in many of His own elect and multitudes who were unsaved up to that time were called by Divine Mercy and brought into the fold. How God protected us there! What peace and prosperity has He given to us! How has He enlarged our borders and multiplied our numbers, so that we are not few, and increased us, so that we are not weak! I think we are not thankful enough for the goodness of the Lord which carried us here and gave us so many who have become useful to us in our Church! Remember in how many places you have worshipped God this year. This place has been enlarged so that more can be held within its walls. Now we can receive more to listen to the voice of the Gospel than we could before. And God seems to say, “Go, forward, go forward still.” The goodness of the Lord has increased as we have gone along. I have often feared, lest the people should desert the house, that when we made it larger we should not have enough to fill it. But the Lord still sends an overwhelming congregation and still gives us Grace to preach His Gospel. How thankful should we be! Surely, “the eye of the Lord” have been upon this Church, “from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.” We have had peace—not a rotten peace, I trust—but the peace of God! Nothing has arisen that should disturb our equanimity. The Church has been kept by the Grace of God faithful to the Doctrines of Grace. Ah, what a blessing it is, that our members have been kept from falling into sin! What a glorious thing that we are carried through another year safely! Some old writer has said, “Every hour that a Christian remains a Christian, is an hour of miracle.” It is true. And every year that the Church is kept an entire Church, is a year of miracle!

It is a year of miracles. Tell it to the wide, wide world. Tell it everywhere! “The eyes of the Lord” have been upon us, “from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.” Two hundred and ten persons have, this year, united with us in Church fellowship. About enough to have formed a church. One half the churches in London cannot number so many in their entire body! And yet the Lord has brought so many into our midst. And still they come. Still they come. Whenever I have an opportunity of seeing those who are converted to God, they come in such numbers that many have to be sent away. Still they come, still they come!

And I am well assured that I have as many, still, in this congregation, who will, during the present year, come forward to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. How often has the sacred pool of baptism been opened this year! How sweetly have we assembled round the Lord's Table! What precious moments we have had at the Monday evening Prayer Meetings! And how glorious it has been when we have publicly recognized Brother after Brother, Sister after Sister, by giving them the right hand of fellowship! In all our ways we hope we have acknowledged Him and He has directed our paths. Sing unto the Lord, for He has done wonders! Bless His name, for He has worked miracles! Praise His Grace, for He has highly exalted His people! Unto Him be honor, forever and ever! And mark you, Brethren, this Church has known what it is to come out of Egypt. We have not toiled with our feet. I hope there has been no desire to draw unfit persons into the Church. I have had no toiling with my feet, I am sure, in preaching the Gospel—no legal preaching—none of your exciting preaching—none of all that toiling with your feet! But we have had nothing but the rain from Heaven. We have not labored to excite carnal passions, nor to preach sermons with a view of driving you into religious fevers. Sturdy old Calvinism will not let us do that! We cannot preach such sermons as Arminians can. The land has been watered by the rain of Heaven. We have not had any of those fatal pestilential mists that sometimes gather round the Church. It is proverbial, that wherever the revivalists go, they always carry desolation. Before them is an Eden. Behind them is a desert! Wherever they go, they search the land like firebrands—though hundreds seem to be converted to God, they are converted to ten times blacker sins than before and the last end of them is worse than the first! [The revivalists since this period have been usually true preachers of the Gospel with whom I have the fullest sympathy. Our remarks are intended for certain American Arminian ravers who have done much mischief.] We want not the getting up of a little feverish passion by appealing to the natural man. It is the drinking water of the rain of Heaven that does the good. I trust it has been so here and that "the eyes of the Lord" have been upon you "from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year."

So, Beloved, I can say that, *as a minister, the eyes of the Lord have been upon me this year.* It has been my privilege, many times this year to preach His Word. I think more than 400 times have I stood in the pulpit to testify His Truth and the eyes of the Lord have been upon me. Blessed be His name! Whether it has been in the north, in the south, in the east, or in the west, I have never lacked a congregation. Nor have I ever gone, again, to any of the places I have preached, without hearing of souls con-

verted. I cannot remember a single village or town that I have visited a second time without meeting with some who blessed God that they heard the Word of Truth there. When I went to Bradford, last time, I stated in the pulpit that I had never heard of a soul being converted through my preaching there. And the good pew-opener came to Brother Dowson and said, "Why didn't you tell Mr. Spurgeon that such-a-one joined the Church through hearing him?" And instantly that dear man of God told me the cheering news! We have met with much opposition this year. Thanks to our Brothers in the ministry, we have not had very much assistance from them. We have been enabled to say to them all, "I will not take from you, from a thread to a shoe-latch, lest you should say, I have made him rich." But how much of that bigotry which formerly existed has subsided! How much of that sneer, which was at one time so common, has now gone away, by God's Grace! I am now rather more afraid of their smiles than their frowns—though I do not think I feel much of either. *Cedo nulli*, was my motto at the beginning and I take it once more. I yield to none! But by the Grace of God I preach His Truth and still, if He helps me, will I hold on my way! And to the Three-in-One God, be eternal honor. Amen.

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

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

GOOD CHEER FOR THE NEW YEAR

NO. 728

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 6, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.”
Deuteronomy 11:12.***

THE Israelites had sojourned for a while in Egypt, a land which only produces food for its inhabitants by the laborious process of irrigating its fields. They had mingled with the sons of Ham as they watched with anxious eyes the swelling of the river Nile. They had shared in the incessant labors by which the waters were preserved in reservoirs, and afterwards eked out by slow degrees to nourish the various crops. Moses tells them in this chapter that the land of Palestine was not at all like Egypt—it was a land which did not so much depend on the labor of the inhabitants as upon the good will of the God of Heaven. He calls it a land of hills and valleys, a land of springs and rivers, a land dependent not upon the rivers of earth but upon the rain of Heaven, and he styles it in conclusion, “A land which the Lord your God cares for: the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.”

Observe here a type of the condition of the natural and the spiritual man! In this world in temporals and in all other respects the merely carnal man has to be his own providence, and to look to himself for all his needs. Hence his cares are always many, and frequently they become so heavy that they drive him to desperation. He lives a life of care, anxiety, sorrow, fretfulness and disappointment. He dwells in Egypt, and he knows that there is no joy, or comfort, or provision if it does not wear out his soul in winning it. But the *spiritual* man dwells in another country! His faith makes him a citizen of another land. It is true he endures the same toils, and experiences the same afflictions as the ungodly, but they deal with him after another fashion, for they come as a gracious Father's *appointments* and they go at the bidding of loving wisdom.

By faith the godly man casts his care upon God who cares for him, and he walks without taking care because he knows himself to be the child of Heaven's loving kindness for whom all things work together for good. God is his great Guardian and Friend, and all his concerns are safe in the hands of infinite Grace! Even in the year of drought the Believer dwells in green pastures and lies down beside the still waters. But as for the ungodly, *he* abides in the wilderness and hears the mutterings of that curse, “Cursed is he that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm. He shall be like the heath in the desert. He shall not see when good comes.”

Do you question my assertion, that Canaan is a fitting type of the present condition of the Christian? We have frequently insisted upon it that it is a far better type of the militant Believer here than of the glorified saint in the New Jerusalem. Canaan is sometimes used by us in our hymns as the picture of Heaven, but it is scarcely so. A moment's reflection will show that it is far more distinctly the picture of the present state of every Believer. While we are under conviction of sin we are like Israel in the wilderness—we have no rest for the sole of our feet—but when we put our trust in Jesus we do, as it were, cross the river and leave the wilderness behind.

“We that have believed do enter into rest,” for, “there remains a rest for the people of God.” Believers have entered into the finished salvation which is provided for us in Christ Jesus! The blessings of our inheritance are in a great measure already in our possession. The state of salvation is no longer a land of promise, but it is a land possessed and enjoyed. We have peace with God! We are even now justified by faith. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” Covenant blessings are at this moment actually ours, just as the portions of the land of Canaan became actually in the possession of the various tribes.

It is true there is an enemy in Canaan, an enemy to be driven out—indwelling sin which is entrenched in our hearts as in walled cities, and fleshly lusts which are like the chariots of iron with which we have to do war—but the land is ours! We have the covenanted heritage at this moment in our possession, and the foes who would rob us of it shall, by the sword of faith, and the weapon of all prayer, be utterly rooted out! The Christian, like Israel in Canaan, is not under the government of Moses now. He has done with Moses once and for all. Moses was magnified and made honorable as he climbed to the top of the hill and with a kiss from God's lips was carried into Heaven. Even so the Law has been magnified and made honorable in the person of Christ, but has ceased to reign over the Believer.

And as Joshua was the leader of the Israelites when they came into Canaan, so is Jesus our Leader now. He it is who leads us on from victory to victory, and He will not sheathe His sword till He has taken unto Himself and given unto us, His followers, the full possession of all the holiness and happiness which covenant engagements have secured for us. For these and many other reasons it is clear that the children of Israel in Canaan were typically in the same condition as we are now who, having believed in Jesus, have our citizenship in Heaven!

Beloved, those of you who are in such a state will relish the text. It is to such persons that the text is addressed. The eyes of the Lord, your God, are always upon you, O Believer, from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year! You who trust in Jesus are under the guidance of the great Joshua! You are fighting sin. You have obtained salvation! You have left the wilderness of conviction and fear behind you. You have come into the Canaan of faith, and now the eyes of God are upon you and upon your state from the opening of the year to its close.

May the Holy Spirit bless us, and we shall, first, take the text as we find it. Secondly, we shall turn the text over. Thirdly, we shall blot the text out, and then, fourthly, we shall distil practical lessons from the text.

I. First, we will consider THE TEXT AS WE FIND IT. The first word that glitters before us, like a jewel in a crown, is that word “eyes.” “The *eyes* of the Lord.” What is meant here? Surely not mere Omniscience. In that sense the eyes of the Lord are in *every* place beholding the evil and the good. God sees Hagar as well as Sarah, and beholds Judas when he gives the traitorous kiss quite as surely as He beholds the holy woman when she washes the feet of the Savior with her tears.

No, there is love in the text to sweeten observation. “The Lord knows the righteous” with a knowledge which is over and above that of Omniscience. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, not merely to see them, but to view them with complacency and delight. He does not merely observe them, but observes them with affectionate care and interest. The meaning of the text, then, is first, that God’s love is always upon His people. Oh, Christians, think of this (it is rather to be *thought* of than to be spoken of), that *God* loves us! The big heart of Deity is set upon us poor, insignificant, undeserving, worthless beings! God loves us, loves us forever, never thinks of us without loving thoughts, never regards us, nor speaks of us, nor acts towards us except in love!

God is love in a certain sense towards all, for He is full of benevolence to all His creatures. Love is, indeed, His Essence—but there is a depth unfathomable when that word is used in reference to His elect ones who are the objects of distinguishing Grace, redeemed by blood, enfranchised by power, adopted by condescension, and preserved by faithfulness. Beloved, do not ask me to speak of this love, but implore God the Holy Spirit to speak of it to your inmost souls! The loving eyes of God are always upon you—the poorest and most obscure of His people—from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year.

The expression of the text teaches us that the Lord takes a *personal* interest in us. It is not here said that God loves us, and therefore sends an angel to protect and watch over us—the Lord does it Himself! The eyes that observe us are God’s own eyes! The Guardian under whose protection we are placed is God Himself! Some mothers put out their children to nurse, but God never does—all his babes hang upon His own breast—and are carried in His own arms. It is little that we could do if we had to perform everything personally and therefore most of the things are done by proxy. The captain, when the vessel is to be steered across the deep, must have his hour of sleep, and then the second in command, or some other, must manage the vessel.

But you will observe that in times of emergency the captain is called up and takes upon himself *personal* responsibility. See him as he himself anxiously heaves the lead, and stands at the helm or at the look-out, for he can trust no one else in perilous moments. It seems from the text that it is always a time of emergency with God’s people, for their great Lord always exercises a *personal* care over them. He has never said to His angels, “I will dispense with My own watching and you shall guard My saints.”

But while He gives them charge concerning His people, yet He Himself is personally their Keeper and their Shield. "I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it I will keep it night and day."

You have sometimes, when you have been very sick, sent for a physician. And it may be that he has been engaged somewhere else, but he has an assistant who probably is quite as skillful as himself, yet, as soon as that assistant comes, such has been your confidence in the man himself for whom you have sent that you feel quite disappointed. You wanted to see the man whom you had tried in days gone by. There is no fear of our being put off with any substitute for our God!

Oh, Beloved, when I think of the text, I feel of the same mind as Moses when God said, "I will send My angel before you." "No," Moses in effect, said, "that will not suffice: if Your Presence go not with us, carry us not up from here." My Lord, I cannot be put off with Gabriel or Michael! I cannot be content with the brightest of the seraphs who stand before Your Throne! It is *Your* Presence I want, and blessed be Your name, it is Your Presence which the text promises to give! The anxious mother is glad to have a careful nurse upon whom she may rely, but in the crisis of the disease, when the little one's life trembles in the balance, she says, "Nurse, I must sit up myself with the child tonight." And though it is the third, perhaps the fourth night, since the mother has had sleep, yet her eyes will not close so long as the particular point of danger is still in view.

See, my Brethren, see the loving tenderness of our gracious God! Never, never, never, does He delegate to others, however good or kind, or to any secondary agents, however active or powerful—the care of His people! His own eyes, without a substitute, must watch over us!

Further, the text reminds us of the unwearied power of God towards His people. What? Can His eyes always be upon us? This were not possible if He were not God. To be always upon one object, man can scarcely do that! And where there are ten thousand times ten thousand objects, how can the same eyes always be upon every one among so many! I know what Unbelief has said to you. He has whispered, "He brings forth the *stars*, He calls them all by their names, how, then, can He notice so mean an insect as you are?" Then we have said, "My way is passed over from God: God has forgotten me. My God has forsaken me!"

But here comes the text. Not only has He not forgotten you, but He has never *once* taken His eyes off you! And though you are one among so many, yet He has observed you as narrowly, as carefully, as tenderly as if there were not another child in the Divine family—nor another one whose prayers were to be heard, or whose cares were to be relieved. What would you think of yourself if you knew that you were the only saved soul in the world, the only elect one of God, the only one purchased on the bloody tree? Why you would feel, "How God must care for me! How He must watch over me! Surely He will never take His eyes off such a special favorite."

And it is the same with you, Beloved, though the family is so large, as if you were the only one! The eyes of the Lord never grow weary—He neither slumbers nor sleeps—both by day and night He observes each one of His

people. If you put these things together—intense affection, personal interest, unwearied power—and then if you remember that all this time God’s heart is actuated by unchanging purposes of Divine Grace towards you, surely there will be enough to make you lose yourself in wonder, love, and praise!

You have sinned in the past of your history, but your sin has never made Him love you less because He never looked upon you as you are *personally* considered, naked, and abstract in yourself. He saw you and loved you *in Christ* in the eternal purpose even when you were dead in trespasses and sins! He has seen you *in Christ* ever since, and has never ceased to love you. It is true you have been very faulty (what tears this ought to cost you!) but as He never loved you for your good works, He has never cast you away for your bad works, but has beheld you as washed in the atoning blood of Jesus till you are whiter than snow—He has seen you clothed in the perfect righteousness of your Surety—and therefore looked upon you and regarded you as though you were without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Grace has always set you before the Lord’s eyes as being in His dear Son all fair and lovely—a pleasing prospect for Him to look upon. He has gazed upon you, Beloved, but never with anger. He has looked upon you when your infirmities, no, your willful wickedness had made you hate *yourself*, and yet, though He has seen you in this doleful state, He had such a regard for your relationship to Christ that you have still been accepted in the Beloved!

I wish it were in the power of mortal speech to convey the full glory of that thought, but it is not. You must eat this morsel alone. You must take it like a wafer made with honey and put it under your tongue and suck the essential sweetness out of it. The eyes of God, my God, are always upon His chosen, as eyes of affection, delight, complacency, unwearied power, immutable wisdom, and unchanging love.

The next word that seems to flash and sparkle in the text is that word “ALWAYS.” “The eyes of the Lord are *always* upon it.” And it is added, as if that word were not enough for such dull ears as ours, “from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year.” This is so plain and pointed that we may not imagine that any one single day, or hour of the day, or minute of the hour we are removed from the eyes or the heart of God! I tried to discover the other day what time there was in one’s life when one could best afford to be without God. Perhaps imagination suggests the time of *prosperity*, when business prospers, wealth is growing, and the mind is happy.

Ah, Beloved, to be without our God *then*, why it would be like the marriage feast without the bridegroom! It would be the day of delight and no delight, a sea and no water in it, day and no light. What? All these mercies and no God? Then there is only so much shell and no kernel, so much shadow and no substance. In the midst of such joys as earth can give in the *absence* of the Lord the soul can hear Satanic laughter, for Satan laughs at the soul because it has tried to make the *world* its rest and is sure to be deceived. Do without God in prosperity, Beloved? We cannot,

for then we should grow worldly, proud, careless, and deep damnation would be our lot.

The Christian in prosperity is like a man standing on a pinnacle—he must then be Divinely upheld or his fall will be terrible! If you can do without God at all, it certainly is not when you are standing on the pinnacle! What, then? Could we do without Him in *adversity*? Ask the heart that is breaking! Ask the tortured spirit that has been deserted by its friend! Ask the child of poverty who has not where to lay his head! Ask the daughter of sickness, tossing by night and day on that uneasy bed, “Could you do without your God?” And the very thought causes wailing and gnashing of teeth!

With God pain becomes pleasure, and dying beds are elevated into thrones, but without God—ah, what could we do? Well then, is there no period? Cannot the *young Christian*, full of freshness and vigor, elated with the novelty of piety, do without his God? Ah, poor puny thing, how can the lamb do without the shepherd to carry it in his arms? Cannot the man in *middle life* then, whose virtues have been confirmed, do without his God? He tells you that it is the day of battle with him, and that the darts fly so thick in business, nowadays, that the burdens of life are so heavy in this age that without God a man in middle life is like a naked man in the midst of a thicket of briars and thorns—he cannot hope to make his way.

Ask yon grey beard with all the experience of seventy years whether at least *he* has not attained to an independence of Divine Grace, and he will say to you that as the weakness and infirmity of the body press upon him it is his *joy* that his inner man is renewed day by day—but take away God, who is the spring of that renewal—and old age would be utter *wretchedness*. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, there is not a *moment* in any one day that you or I have ever lived that we could have afforded to dispense with the help of God! When we have thought ourselves strong, alas, we have been fools enough to think so—in five minutes we have done that which has cost us rivers of tears to undo! In an unguarded moment we have spoken a word which we could not recall, but which we would have recalled if we should have had to bite our tongues in halves to have had it unsaid.

We have thought a thought when God has left us which has gone whizzing through our souls like a hellish thunderbolt making a fiery path along the spirit. We may well wonder how it is that the evil thought did not become a terrible act as it would have done if God, whom we had forgotten, had forgotten us! We need to set the Lord always before us. Let us then, when we wake in the morning, take this promise with us and say, Lord, You have said You will always be with us—then leave us not till the dews of evening fall and we return to our couch. Leave us not even when we are there, lest in the night, temptation should be whispered in our ears and we should wake to defile our mind with unholiness. Leave us never, O our God, but always be our very present help!

Last year was, perhaps, the most gloomy of our lives. All the newspaper summaries of 1866 are like the prophetic roll which was written within

and without with lamentations. The year has gone, and everybody is glad to think that we have entered upon a new one—yet, who knows but what 1867 may be worse? Who can tell? Well, Brothers and Sisters, let it be what God chooses it shall be. Let it be what He appoints, for there is this comfort in the assurance that not a moment from this Sunday night on to December 31st, 1867, shall be without the tender care of Heaven. Not even for a second will the Lord remove His eyes from any of His people! Here is good cheer for us! We will march boldly into this wilderness, for the pillar of fire and cloud will never leave us! The manna will never cease to drop, and the Rock that followed us will never cease to flow with living streams. Onward, onward, let us go, joyously confident in our God!

The next word that springs from the text is that great word JEHOVAH. It is a pity that our translators did not give us the names of God as they found them in the original. The word LORD in capitals is well enough, but that grand and glorious name of “Jehovah” should have been retained. In this case we read, “the eyes of Jehovah are always upon it.” He who surveys us with love and care is none other than the one and indivisible God, so that we may conclude, if we have His eyes to *view* us, we have His heart to *love* us!

And if we have His heart, we have His wings to cover us. We have His hands to bear us up. We have the everlasting arms to be underneath us. We have *all* the attributes of Deity at our command. Oh, Christian, when God says that He always looks at you, He means this—that He is always yours! There is nothing which is necessary for you which He will refuse to do! There is no wisdom stored up in Him which He will not use for you. There is no one attribute of all that great mass of splendor which makes up the Deity which shall be withheld from you in any measure. All that God is shall be yours. He shall be your God forever and ever! He will give you Grace and glory, and be your guide even unto death.

Perhaps the sweetest word of the text is that next one—the eyes of Jehovah “YOUR GOD.” Ah, there is a blessed secret! Why? Ours in Covenant! Our God, for He chose us to be His portion, and by His Grace He has made us choose Him to be our portion. We are His and He is ours—

**“So I my best Beloved’s am,
So He is mine.”**

“Your God.” Blessed be the Lord, we have learned to view Him not as another man’s God but as *our* God! Christian, can you claim a property in God this day? Has your hand, by faith, grasped Him? Has your heart, by love, twisted its tendrils round Him? Do you feel Him to be the greatest possession that you have—that all creatures are but a dream, an empty show—but that God is your substantial treasure, your All in All?

Oh, then, it is not an absolute God whose eyes are upon you, but God in Covenant relationship regards you. “Your God.” What a word is this! He who is watching me is my Shepherd. He who cares for me is my Father—not my God, alone, by way of power—but my *Father* by way of relationship! He is One who, though He is so great that the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, yet deigned to visit this poor earth robed in mortal flesh that He might become like we, and He is now our God—the God of

His people by near and dear relationship! In ties of blood Jesus is with sinners one, our Husband, our Head, our All in All! And we are His fullness, the fullness of Him that fills all in all.

Thus the eyes of God, as the Covenant God of Israel, are upon His people from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. I must now leave the text to talk to you alone by itself. Much more may be said, but better unsaid by me, if you let the text say it to you. Talk to the text, I pray you—let it journey with you till you can say of it as the disciples said of Christ, “Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us by the way?”

II. We are now to TURN THE TEXT OVER, that is to say, we will misread it, yet read it rightly. Suppose the text were to run thus—“The eyes of the Lord’s people are always upon Him from the beginning of the year to the end of the year”? Dear Friends, we like the text as it stands, but I do not believe we shall ever comprehend the fullness of it unless we receive it as I have now altered it, for we only understand God’s sight of *us* when we get a sight of *Him*. God, unknown to us, is our Protector, but He is not such a Protector that we can comfortably repose upon Him.

We must discern Him by the eyes of faith, or else the mercy, though given by God, is not spiritually enjoyed in our hearts. Beloved, if God looks at us, how much more ought we to look at Him? When God sees us what does He see? Nothing—I was going to say—nothing, if He looks at us in *ourselves*. We are but that which is unworthy to be looked at. Now, on the contrary, when we look at Him what do *we* see? Oh such a sight, that I wonder not that Moses said, “I beseech You, show me Your Glory.”

What a vision will it be! Will it not be Heaven’s own vision to see God? Is not it the peculiar prerogative of the pure in heart that they shall see God? And yet, I cannot understand it! Some of us have had the right to see God for years, and we have occasionally seen Him face to face, as a man speaks to his friend—by faith we have seen God, but, Beloved, what I cannot understand is that we see so little of Him! Do you ever find yourself living all day without God? Not perhaps absolutely so, for you would not like to go to business without a little prayer in the morning. But do you not sometimes get through that morning’s prayer without seeing God at all?

I mean, is it not just the form of kneeling down, and saying good words and getting up again? And all through the day, have you not lived away from God? This is a strange world to live in. There are not many things to make one happy, and yet somehow we forget the very things that could give us happiness and keep our eyes upon the frivolous cares and teasing troubles which distract us. So we even close the night—no taste of His love, no kiss of His lips that is better than wine. And our evening prayer—poor moaning it is, hardly a prayer.

I fear it is possible to live not only days, but *months* at this dying rate! And it is horrible living, such horrible living that I would infinitely prefer to be locked up in the moldiest dungeon in which a man of God ever rotted and have the Lord’s Presence, than I would care to live in the noblest palace in which a sinner ever sported himself without God. After all, that is it which makes life—life is the enjoyment of the Presence of God! It is

not so with the worldling—he can live without God, like the swine, who, being contented with their husks, lie down and sleep and wake again to feed. But the Christian cannot live on husks—he has a stomach above them—and if he does not get his God he will be miserable.

God has ordained it so that a spiritual man is wretched without the love of God in his heart. If you and I want present happiness without God, we had better be sinners outright and live upon this world than try to be happy in religion without communion with Jesus. Present happiness for a genuine Christian in the absence of Christ is an absolute impossibility! We must have God or we are, of all men, most miserable.

Suppose that in this year 1867 we were, at any rate, filled with the desire to have our eyes always upon God from the beginning of the year to the end of the year—to be always conscious that He sees us, to be always sensible of His Presence—more than that, to be always longing to be obedient to His commands, always desiring to win souls for His dear Son from the beginning of the year to the end of the year? What a happy thing this would be! If we could abide in a spirit of prayerfulness or thankfulness, devout, consecrated, loving, tender, it would be a high thing to attain unto.

Brethren, we believe in a great God who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or even think. Why not expect great things from Him? I think of this blessing and I dare to ask for it—surely, then, He is able to give it. Do not let us stand back because of unbelief! Let us ask that as God's eyes will be upon us, our eyes may be upon Him. What a blessed meeting of eyes when the Lord looks us full in the face and we look at Him through the Mediator Christ Jesus, and the Lord declares, "I love you," and we answer, "We also love You, O our God!" Oh that we may be in harmony with the Lord our God and find ourselves drawn upwards and bound to Him!

May the Lord be the Sun, and we the dewdrops which sparkle in His rays and are exhaled and drawn aloft by the heat of His love! May God look down from Heaven and we look up to Heaven, and both of us be happy in the sight of each other, delighting and rejoicing in mutual affection! This is what communion means. I have taken a long while to bring it to that one word, but that is what it means—

***"Daily communion let me prove
With You, blest Object of my love."***

That was Toplady's desire, but I am afraid if I would express my own experience I must close with the other two of the verses where Toplady says—

***"But oh, for this no strength have I,
My strength is at Your feet to lie."***

III. In the third place, we will imagine that WE BLOT THE TEXT OUT ALTOGETHER. Not that we can blot it out or would do so if we could, but we are to suppose that it is blotted out to imagine that you and I have to live all the year *without* the eyes of God upon us—not finding a moment from the beginning of the year to the end of the year in which we perceive the Lord to be caring for us or to be waiting to be gracious to us. Imagine

that there is none to whom we may appeal beyond our own fellow creatures for help. Oh miserable supposition!

We have come to the opening of the year, and we have to get through it somehow. We must stumble through January, go muddling through the winter, groaning through the spring, sweating through the summer, fainting through the autumn, and groveling on to another Christmas, and no God to help us! No prayer when God is gone, no promise when God is no more. There could be no promise, no spiritual succor, no comfort, no help for us if there were no God! I will suppose this to be the case with any one of us here.

But I hear you cry out, "Imagine not such a thing, for I should be like an orphan child without a father! I should be helpless—a tree with no water to its roots." But I will suppose this is the case of you *sinner*s. You know you have been living for 20, or 30, or 40 years without God, without prayer, without trust, without hope—yet I should not wonder that if I were solemnly to tell you that God would not let you pray during the next year, and would not help you if you did pray—I should not wonder if you were greatly startled at it! Though I believe that the Lord *will* hear you from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Though I believe that He will watch over you and bless you if you seek Him, yet I fear that the most of you are despising His care, living without fellowship with Him, and so you are without God, without Christ, without hope, and will be so from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

There is a story told of a most eccentric minister, that walking out one morning he saw a man going to work and said to him, "What a lovely morning! How grateful we ought to be to God for all His mercies!" The man said he did not know much about it. "Why," said the minister, "I suppose you always pray to God for your wife and family—for your children—don't you?" "No," said he, "I do not know that I do." "What," said the minister, "do you never pray?" "No." "Then I will give you half-a-crown, if you will promise me you never will as long as ever you live." "Oh," said he, "I shall be very glad of half-a-crown to get me a drop of beer."

He took the half-crown and promised never to pray as long as he lived. He went to his work, and when he had been digging for a little while, he thought to himself, "That's a strange thing I have done this morning—a very strange thing—I've taken money and promised never to pray as long as I live." He thought it over, and it made him feel wretched. He went home to his wife and told her of it. "Well, John," she said, "you may depend upon it, it was the devil! You've sold yourself to the devil for half-a-crown." This so bowed the poor wretch down that he did not know what to do with himself! This was all he thought about—that he had sold himself to the devil for money—and would soon be carried off to Hell.

He commenced attending places of worship, conscious that it was of no use, for he had sold himself to the devil. He became really ill, bodily ill, through the fear and trembling which had come upon him. One night he recognized in the preacher the very man who had given him the half-crown, and probably the preacher recognized him, for the text was, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own

soul?” The preacher remarked that he knew a man who had sold his soul for half-a-crown. The poor man rushed forward and said, “Take it back! Take it back!” “You said you would never pray,” said the minister, “if I gave you half-a-crown! Do you now want to pray?” “Oh yes, I would give the world to be allowed to pray.”

That man was a great fool to sell his soul for half-a-crown! But some of you are a great deal bigger fools, for you never had the half-crown and yet you still do not pray! And I dare say you never will, but will go down to Hell never having sought God. Perhaps if I could make this text negative, and say to you, “the eyes of God will *not* be upon you from the beginning of this year to the end of the year, and God will *not* hear and bless you,” it might alarm and awaken you.

But though I suggest the thought, I would rather you say, “Oh let not such a curse rest upon me, for I may die this year, and I may die this day. O God, hear me now!” Ah, dear Hearer, if such a desire is in your heart the Lord *will* hear you and bless you with His salvation.

III. Let us close with USING THE TEXT. The way to use it is this. If the eyes of the Lord will be upon us His people from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, what shall we do? Why, let us be as happy as we can during this year! You have your trials and troubles to come—do not expect that you will be free from them. The devil is not dead, and sparks still fly upward. Herein is your joy—the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ will never leave you nor forsake you. Up with your standard now and march on boldly!

In the name of the Lord set up your banner and begin to sing! Away with carking care—God cares for us! The sparrows are fed, and shall not the children be? The lilies bloom, and shall not the saints be clothed? Let us roll all our burdens upon the Burden-Bearer. You will have enough to care for if you care for His cause as you should. Do not spoil your power to care for God by caring for yourself. This year let your motto be, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

By anxious thought you cannot add a cubit to your stature, nor turn one hair white or black! Take, then, no anxious thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Lean upon your God and remember His promise that as your day is so shall your strength be. “I would have you,” says the Apostle, “I would have you without carefulness.” He does not mean, I would have you without economy, without prudence and without discretion, but he means he would have you without fretfulness, without distrustful care. He would have you be without care for yourself, because the Lord’s eyes will be upon you!

Further, dear Friends, I would have you use the text by the way of seeking greater blessings and richer mercies than you have ever enjoyed. Blessed be God for His merciful kindness towards this Church. His loving kindnesses have been very many! His favors new every morning and fresh every evening—but we need more! Let us not be content with a February blessing, though that is generally the month in which we have had our refreshing. Let us seek to get a blessing to-day! I hope you will get it this af-

ternoon in the Sunday school, you workers there. And I hope you will have it in the senior classes from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Let there be no dullness, lethargy, and lukewarmness in the classes this afternoon!

The Brother who has to address the school, will, I hope, speak to you with fervor and earnestness. There must be no coldness there. And I hope you who are preaching in the street, if it is possible in such weather, or going from house to house with tracts, or doing anything else, will have a blessing on this first Sunday of the year! But then, shall we grow cold *next* Sunday? Not at all! It is from the beginning of the year to the *end* of the year! Shall we endeavor to get up a little excitement and have a revival for five or six weeks? No, blessed be God, we must have it from the beginning of the year to the *end* of the year!

While we have a spring which never grows dry, why should the pitcher ever be empty? Surely gratitude can find us fuel enough in the forests of memory to keep the fire of love always flaming. Why should we be weary when the glorious prize is worthy of our constant exertions, when the great crowd of witnesses hold us in full survey? May our Lord, by His Spirit bring you and me to a high pitch of *prayerfulness*, and then let us continue in prayer from the beginning of the year to the end of the year!

May God bring you and me to a high degree of *generosity*, and then may we be always giving from the beginning of the year to the end of the year every week, from the first to the last, always laying by in store as God has prospered us for His cause. May we be always active, always industrious, always hopeful, always spiritual, always heavenly, and always raised up and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus!

So may our gracious God deal with us from the beginning of the year to the end of the year through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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DAYS OF HEAVEN UPON THE EARTH

NO. 3425

A SERMON
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“As the days of Heaven upon the earth.”
Deuteronomy 11:21.

As this text was originally written, it referred only to the length of life and the length of endurance which God promised to His obedient Israel. If they walked in His statutes, the Kingdom was to abide from generation to generation, without end, “as the days of Heaven upon earth.” But it seems to me that such a phrase as this ought to mean something more, if it did not, and might be used to express—and must be used to express many of those happy seasons which we have enjoyed when the Lord has manifested Himself to us—and which have been to us “as the days of Heaven upon the earth.” But is not the expression exaggeration? Is it not too strong? Brothers and Sisters, I think not. There were days of Heaven upon earth once. Every day upon earth was a day of Heaven before our first parent stretched out his hand and broke his Lord’s command. When he walked through the Garden of Eden, by the side of the rippling Hiddekel, or the streaming Euphrates, which rolled over sands of gold. As he reclined under the shadow of the trees from the heat of the sun, and plucked the generous fruit, God was with him as his Companion and manifested Himself to His favorite creature. Those were, indeed, days of Heaven upon earth! There was no strife, no sin, no sorrow—everything was happy! It seemed as if this world was but one chamber of God’s great house, one of the many mansions in our Father’s house, the vestibule of Glory, the portal of the skies—the ground floor, if I may say so, of the Master’s palace which reached high up beyond the clouds! There *were* days of Heaven upon earth—and we know from the sweetest prophecies, as sure as they are sweet, that there *will* be days of Heaven upon earth again, and that for a continuance! He who went up to Heaven from Olivet will so come, in like manner, as we have seen Him go up into Heaven! And when He comes, then will He reign in the midst of His people. And we are in the habit of speaking of that glorious reign with intense delight. No strife shall vex Messiah’s reign! There shall be no sorrow, then. They shall hang the useless helmet in the hall and study war no more—halcyon days! A millennial period! Peace like a river! Righteousness like the waves of the sea, for He shall live and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba! Prayer, also, shall be made for Him continually and daily shall He be praised! We are looking for the advent of the Lord, praying for

it, desiring to be found in a working and waiting posture whenever He may come! And when He comes, then, to the letter, there shall be a long-continued series of days of Heaven upon the earth! But, dear Friends, it is of little service to mourn the past, and though it may be of much benefit to expect the future, yet what shall we say about the present? I think the present is not without some happy seasons which may be likened to the days of the text.

My first business at this time will be to mention *some of the days which are fit to be called days of Heaven upon the earth*. Then, secondly, I shall *answer the question—why do we not have more of them?* And then, thirdly, I shall try to *show the best ways of getting more of them*. First, then, though man is born to sorrow, yet—

I. WE HAVE MOST HAPPY AND BLESSED PERIODS—DAYS OF HEAVEN UPON EARTH. And the first I will mention is *the day in which we first look to Jesus and lose our sins*. Our Revival Hymnbook sings—

**“Happy day! Happy day!
When Jesus washed my sins away.”**

The long time of conviction, the dolorous winter of sorrow made the day of our release the happier and the brighter, just as the oasis is all the greener in contrast with the dry, sandy region over which the traveler has passed. The first day of our conversion, when we know Christ and have peace through Him, is a peculiarly green and happy spot in our life’s pilgrimage. We can never forget it. Some of us had a very distinct time and place of conversion. To us the day when we looked to Jesus is as fresh as though it were newly coined from the mint of time. Other days have lost their peculiar image and superscription. We can scarcely recollect any one of our birthdays, perhaps, unless something very remarkable has happened on them. But that day, if we were to live to be as old as Methuselah, we would still remember and count it to be the true day of our birth, the day when we truly began to live—for all before it was but dead! Dear Friends, do you remember the excessive joy of that day? It must have been so with all of you—but with some of us the joy was more than we could bear! We were like Simeon, when he saw the Lord and said, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace.” We made no stipulations with God. We would have been content to rot in a dungeon, or to lie tossing on the sick bed of a hospital, now that we had found Christ! We needed nothing beyond! We could have dared the very gates of Hell in that day to stop our joy! Satan, himself, could not have made us cease from singing, so joyous were we. Probably others noticed it and asked why it was—and they learned that the Lord had done great things for us, whereof we were glad. Oh, I wish this evening some of you could find the Savior! Some of you, perhaps, did not come here to find Him, but you want Him. You are feeling your sins, perhaps, pressing heavily upon you. Your guilt is like a burden upon your back—I do hope you will look to the Cross of Christ, for if you do, the strings will crack that bind your burden to your back and you shall leap for joy to find that you are free! There is life for a look at the Crucified One! And with that life there comes such a

flood of joy that I would not wonder if you were almost ready, when you get home, to begin singing in the house even though there might be some there who could not sympathize with your joy! It is one of the days of Heaven upon earth when a soul casts its anchor upon Christ and says, "I am at rest, at rest forever!"

It must not be thought, however, that this is the only season, for often—very often—*days of calm and peace* are, to the Christian, like days of Heaven upon earth! Have you not often felt a stillness in your souls—cares gone, doubts fled, troubles forgotten—all so peaceful within that you did not seem to have a wish, nor a need and, happy in the Savior's love, you did not care for all the world beside? You have got up in the morning and you have felt so happy—there was no excitement, no exuberance of feeling—but still, such a peaceful happiness that you would not have changed your state with the King upon his throne! You had to go to business and there was a good deal to try you, but you were not vexed. You seemed to put it all aside and to go through the day talking with Christ, your hands busy below, but your heart occupied above—your treasure being in Heaven and your heart being there, too—and that continued all day! And, perhaps, at night, at the family altar, they noticed how sweetly you prayed, and, if they did not, you remember what a calm there was upon you when you went upstairs and cast yourself upon the bed and slept. And if you awoke during the night, you found that you were still with God! With some of us there have been many such periods—and they have lasted sometimes by the week together! But far oftener they have come and gone very soon. And to many they have been like angels' visits—few and far between—yet have we had enough of them to make us have a foretaste of that happier shore where all is forever peace, where the dove builds her nest and is never disturbed, where not a wave of trouble ever rolls across a sea of everlasting rest, where the angels continually sing the praises of God and there are no groans to mar the melody of their seraphic songs! Yes, those days of quiet peacefulness were as days of Heaven upon earth!

And we have got beyond that. Many Christians can remember *days of praise*. Have you not had days in which your souls seemed taken up with singing God's praises? I do not mean that you went into the street or in public, but your soul kept singing—you had got the prayer answered—

***"Oh, may my soul in tune be found,
Like David's harp of solemn sound!"***

You wanted to tell everybody about what your God had done for you! And when you had an opportunity, you told of the goodness of the Lord and bade people to, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." You went to see the sick, and if they murmured, you put aside their murmuring, for you, yourself, felt so happy that you could scarcely sympathize with a murmuring spirit! And when you went up to the assembly of God's House and they sang some of their joyous songs, when, like a peal of thunder, their notes of praise went up and made the walls ring again, oh, how blessed were you! Why, I say it without exaggeration, I have sometimes,

in this House, when we have been singing some of God's praises, felt as though it could not be much better to be in Heaven than it was to be in the midst of God's people singing with all their hearts His praises! We have sometimes run up the gamut until we reached the top of the scale and seemed to have almost got to the top of Jacob's ladder—and almost ready to step into Heaven! Blessed days of praise! We can never forget you, for you have been "as the days of Heaven upon the earth." Days of finding Christ, days of peace, days of praise are "as the days of Heaven upon the earth."

Among the choicest seasons in a Christian's life, however, are those in which he finds himself *honored of God in the conversion of souls*. Those are days of Heaven upon earth! I would like to know, but I suppose it is impossible to find out—I would like to know how many of us, here, who are Christians, are spiritual parents. I am afraid if there was a stocktaking, there would not be found many diligent ones among us—and that is not to our credit. Every Christian should make it to be one of the grand aims of his life, if not the grandest, to bring others to reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ! Now, as some of you may never have tried this, I would like to encourage you by offering you the sweet reward which God gives to those who labor for Him. Ah, my dear Friend, the City Missionary, you need not tell me of all your toils among the poor, the ragged and the filthy—true every word—but there is one thing I would like you to tell me. When you have met with a poor sinner who has been plucked by you from the depths of degradation and you have seen the tears of gratitude glistening in the eyes of a convert, have not you felt that it has made up for it all? You are no true missionary if you cannot say that! And do not tell me, my dear Brother minister, of all the toils of preaching to a people who seem weary of hearing—and of endeavoring to convince those of the Truth of God who do not care to listen to it—we know all about that! But let me ask you, when you have heard that a penitent has come to Christ and it has been said, "Behold he prays!" have not you felt that you have been rewarded for ten times more toil and trouble than you have ever put forth? If one could be cut in pieces and every piece could be hanged or flayed alive, it were worthwhile to suffer all that for the bringing of one soul to Christ—because if Jesus Christ thought it worth His while to suffer unutterable pains to redeem a soul—it would be worth the while of any one of Christ's people to suffer the same—if that were the way to bring sinners to Him! Let me tell you that there is no joy like it! When you can hear a penitent say, "Blessed be God, I was once far from Him by wicked works, but I listened to the Truth of God as you proclaimed it. I heard your prayer in the class and it touched my heart—it broke me down and afterwards it led me out of darkness into Christ's marvelous light—and blessed be God, I am saved!" Oh, there is no joy like it, and he that has many souls thus given to him for his hire must enjoy many of the days of Heaven upon earth!

Again, I believe there is many a family where this same joy has been felt—not by those who were the immediate instruments of conversion,

but by those who have long prayed for the conversion of such. Your good mother, now, John, if you were to go home tonight a saved soul, would be made unspeakably happy! The dear old soul has been praying for you these many years. She wept over you when you were in your cradle. She has often prayed for you when you have been cursing and swearing—and has she, sometimes, fears that she will go to her grave and never see her child brought in? But if she were to hear that you were saved, there would be a day of Heaven upon earth in that family! How many households are there where the conversion of the husband has turned a little Hell into a little Heaven? You know how children are afraid of the father—how they run upstairs to get to bed because the father comes home the worse for drink—and how the poor mother suffers. There may be a little furniture, but she knows at any moment it may go off to the pawnbrokers to be converted into money to get more of the accursed liquor! And she lives in perpetual bondage and fear! But one night he comes home very thoughtful—where has he been? Oh, he has been to such-and-such a place of worship! Do you know the woman cannot sleep that night for hope? She is in hopes that there may be a change come over him—and when she sees him washing himself the next morning, and she hears that he is going back to the same place—how her heart beats with joy and hope and how heartily does she pray that her husband may become a changed character! And when he comes home and sits down, and the tears begin to flow, and he says, “Wife, we never prayed together. You know that I could never bear the thoughts of your praying. But it is all changed, now—get the Bible and let us see if we cannot pray together tonight.” That is one of the days of Heaven upon earth! There is joy to the mother who finds her son saved, joy to the wife who sees her husband converted—and it is equal joy to the husband when he gets his wife converted! There are some husbands who have sore trouble with ungodly wives. And they have prayed often and I hope they will not grow cast-down and leave off praying. The Lord who blessed them can bless their wives! Wait, never give in, never give up praying, as long as they have breath in their bodies, as long as they are on praying ground, pray for them and they may be converted! Then there will be joy, unspeakable joy and full of glory even on earth, when such an one is brought to know the Lord! These are, indeed, days of Heaven upon earth!

I think the Church has sometimes had them. Some of you do not know much about it—you do not work for Christ, you do not pray for souls—you do not feel for souls. But I could pick out in this assembly, if it were right, some who know a great deal about it because the Lord has given them a yearning heart and a tender soul so that they weep for others’ sorrows and repent of others’ sins. These are the persons that know, in deed and in truth, that there are days of Heaven upon earth! They travail and, therefore, they know the joy of her who forgets her travail because a man-child is born into the world!

But I must hasten on. There are other days. Dear Friends, a communion with loving, *Christian Brother and Sisters* often brings days of Hea-

ven upon earth. I know some churches where there seem to be as many sects in the church as there are male members—where there is no love, no unity, no affection, no contention for the faith—but much contention for power and position! Now they never have days of Heaven upon earth. But where Christians love each other, there is the dew of Heaven! Some Christians greatly envy you, your privileges, and in belonging to a united Church. Scores of times, when I have received members who have been united before with churches split up and divided, they have said—

***“Here would I find a settled rest,
While others go and come!
No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home.”***

And I know there are many of you who have found a settled rest here and you have found, in communion with God’s people, that you are made to lie down in green pastures and go beside the still waters. Lonely Christians lose much comfort and I think those Christians who are always going abroad for company lose more. But those who have a select few whom they love, and with whom they associate, and with whom they can enjoy holy communion, will find many such days. I must confess that I have often been loath to go to bed when I have had a few beloved friends to talk about better things—and I am afraid if we had had our way and had not had to go to work the next morning, we would have let the clock get into the small hours, for so sweet was the company and the talk, we did not like to part! When Jesus Christ is the theme, there is no fear of weariness! And when those who know Him speak about Him, there is such freshness in their speech that one likes to let them go on without stopping them at all. Christian fellowship, how sweet! And if you get into a Christian family and live in it, how happy and pleasant it is! Some families have a morose father who seems to think there is no one in the world to be cared for except himself—and he domineers and is a tyrant. Others have a touchy, crotchety, quick-tempered mother and very little can go right with them long together. Others have a negligent woman, perhaps untidy, who does not attend to the house, but is a gossip. Now, to live in such houses as those is a misery, but if you get into some houses such as I have known, where the father endeavors, while he rules the house, to do it with love, where the mother is the very pattern of her sex, where the children are obedient and yet happy and free—where the servants feel an interest in the master’s affairs, because the master feels an interest in theirs—it is like a little Heaven upon earth! It is a blessed thing to drop into such a house, for you feel there, indeed, they have days of Heaven upon earth! When you young people marry, I hope you will set up just such houses and that it will be your desire to make your homes such that people may like to live in them. I would have your houses like that of Sir Thomas Abney, where Dr. Watts went to stay a few days—and stayed 26 years! It was too good a house to leave! Let your houses be such that when good men come, they will feel, “Here is the place where we can find rest.” May you have many days of Heaven upon earth in such a way!

Now, to pass on, surely the highest of all will be found in a *close communion with Christ*. There is a nearness of approach to Christ of which to speak in the carnal ear would be to cast pearls before swine. There is a secret and mysterious conversation carried on between earth and Heaven of which Solomon sang in mystic numbers in the Canticles—and which saints have enjoyed, but which no tongue can adequately express—a peace which is not only like Heaven, but *is* Heaven! It is a piece of Heaven cast down to us here! It is not a grape from some wilderness vine, but a cluster from the vine of Eshcol and Eshcol was in Canaan, itself. The Lord gives earnest of His love, pledges of joys to come, so that even here we have, in communion with Christ, days of Heaven upon earth! But I must not prolong the catalog, for time fails me. I think I have said enough to make some feel that the Christian's life is a happy one—let me add my testimony that it is! Let me add, not mine, but the testimony even of many a Negro slave in the days of slavery, who could say that, notwithstanding all suffering and all penury and every ill, a Christian's life was a happy one, after all. Now, the second point was to be an enquiry, if there are so many days of Heaven upon earth—

II. WHY DO WE NOT HAVE MORE OF THEM?

I think there are many reasons. *Some people think it wicked to be happy*. You smile, but I know some Christians who even seem to think that it is a sign of growth in Grace when you grow to be blessedly miserable! They imagine that for anything like joy to be in a Christian is incompatible with sincerity. We have not so learned Christ! We know that through much tribulation we inherit the Kingdom of God, but we have learned that as tribulation abounds, so consolation abounds through Jesus Christ. Let your face lack no oil and your head no ointment—go your way and live happily and joyfully—for if God has accepted you, there is no flesh living that has such a right to be joyous! Accepted in the Beloved! Cleansed from sin! Clothed with the righteousness of Christ! Safe for Heaven! Why should you not be happy? Go to the weeping willows, take down your harps and begin to strike them to melodious tunes. You ought to be happy, you people of the living God! Let the righteous be glad. Yes, let them shout for joy! Some Christians, perhaps, do not think it is wrong to be happy, but they will not be. Almost as a matter of principle, they will not be happy. You cannot please them. They are thorough Englishmen—they exercise the blessed prerogative of grumbling. No matter what it is, they can always see something or other to find fault with in it. If they have much, it might be more. If they have little, they are harshly treated. The blessings of the upper springs cannot content them unless the nether springs flow in as freely. And the mercies that come from Heaven will not please them unless they can have their share of the mercies of earth. Oh, dear Friends, pray the Lord to give you a new heart and a right spirit! I cannot make out what such a body as you will do in Heaven. Ask your Master to take away your grumpy spirit so that you may be able to see reasons for joy, for there are many of them! Charnock says, “He who observes Providence will never be without Providence to

observe,” and we can say, he who is willing to be made happy may never be without something to make him happy, if he chooses to look for it.

There are some of us who do not have as many days of Heaven upon earth because *we could hardly bear them*. Joy has sometimes danger with it. There are, among the flowers, poisonous asps. The Christian has need, when his cup is full, to carry it with a steady hand. Too much spiritual joy might even be too much for the physical frame, like the old Scotch Divine who called out, “Hold, Lord! Hold, Lord! It is enough! Remember I am but an earthen vessel. Give me no more joy, lest I die of excess of it!” Yes, there might be spiritual maladies, if not bodily ones—we might grow proud, self-conceited and lifted up. If we have much sail, we need much ballast and, perhaps, the furnace is as good a place for us as any place on earth until we get to Heaven. If we had so many of these days of Heaven upon earth, we might never long to go to Heaven at all, we might say, “This is a place happy enough for us!” But the Lord will not let us do so. He will make the wilderness to be a wilderness, still, that we may be willing to go on to Canaan. He would not have the sailor so content with the vessel as not to desire the port—and so He sends us rough days and stiff breezes that we may be disturbed and long for our desired haven. There is one thing more—if we had so many of these days and no troubles, *we would not be like Christ*—we would lack one point of conformity to Him, for He was “a Man of Sorrows.” We are to have fellowship with Him in His sufferings—and if our path were always smooth and our sky always bright—we might not know as well as we now know what the sufferings of Jesus Christ meant. We might be losers in Heaven if we were not sufferers here, for I suppose it will be a part of the joy in Heaven to remember the sorrow through which we came, to recollect the difficulties which we overcame and if we have not sorrows or difficulties, we shall not have so sweet a song. Rest is all the sweeter to the laboring man, and so shall the rest of Heaven be all the better because of the days of grief and sorrow which we had on earth. But now, lastly—

III. WHAT CAN WE DO TO GET MORE OF THE DAYS OF HEAVEN UPON EARTH?

Well, we cannot build a city with streets of gold. We cannot find chrysolites and pearls with which to build a Jerusalem the Golden! We must take the place as we find it. And this world of ours, though a very fair earth, is not all we should like it to be—but we cannot alter it. It is very much like a convict settlement, a prison house to Christians. This is not our rest and, as we look abroad upon it, we feel it is not a proper place for the spirit to dwell in. It needs a better land in which to develop itself. But how, then, are we to get Heaven upon earth? I think there are three things we can do. The first is, we can get it, if we cannot alter the place, *by being more like the spirits in Heaven*. They are happy in Heaven, not only because it is Heaven, but because they are heavenly! They could not be otherwise than happy. If those blessed spirits were on earth, so perfectly pure as they are, they would be perfectly happy. It is not, I say, so much the place that makes their Heaven, as their state of mind. They are

completely conformed to the will of God. They delight themselves intensely in the Most High. They have been freed from their earthly grossness and they are now like the pure gold that has passed through the furnace. Let us pray for holiness and we shall get happiness! Let us ask to be heavenly-minded and we shall get Heaven! There is no fear about our joy if we can get holiness. Very much in proportion as we shall become fit for Heaven shall we have days of Heaven upon earth!

And then a second thing we can do. If we cannot get the place, *we can get the objective that makes the place such a place as it is*—that is to say, if we cannot get Heaven, we can get days of Heaven upon earth by getting Christ, for it is Christ who makes Heaven, as the sun makes the day! Christ is the flower in that garden that makes all the rest sweet! Christ is Heaven's crown and glory, it's brightest jewel and diadem—and he that gets his heart set upon Christ gets the better part of Heaven! At any rate, he can do without the angels and without the harps of gold for a time. When he gets Christ in his heart, the hope of glory—when the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit—and he can say, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His,” he has got the major part of Heaven and may have days of Heaven upon earth!

There is a third thing that we can do to get Heaven, and that is to follow the occupation of those who are in Heaven. A man's joy or sorrow comes very much from what he has to do. In Heaven they are always serving and praising. If we get the same work to do, if we enter into the same happy choir and sing praises to our heavenly King, and try to serve Him without weariness, why, then, we shall get, again, the better part of Heaven by getting the occupation of it! Holy men with Christ in their hearts, and with Christ's work in their hands, spend many days of Heaven upon earth! We did not find Mr. Whitfield and Mr. Wesley very often troubled with doubts and fears—and I believe the reason was because their tenor of life was on high, their communion with Jesus was very close and, above all, because they were so hard at work for their Master that they had not time to sit down and begin raking in the mire of doubts and fears! May we be just such men as they were—and we shall have days of Heaven upon earth!

Now, alas, alas, alas, there are many to whom I am now speaking who will have no days of Heaven upon earth, but they will have their poor unsatisfactory days to drag their weary length along and then, at last, will come the days of death. Ah, then, there are some that have had days of Hell upon earth—some who have made the nurse declare that they would never nurse such a man, again, for all the world—some who have made their very parents start from their bedside to hear their cries as they lay there suffering from the rod of Almighty wrath! Take care, take care that such is not your end! And if you would escape from it, remember the door of Heaven is Christ! The door is wide open! Only come to it, trust Christ, and you shall have days of Heaven upon earth, and afterwards Heaven, itself, shall be your portion! God grant that it shall be so for His name's sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
DEUTERONOMY 6:1-23.**

Verses 1, 2. *Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD, your God, commanded to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you go to possess it. That you might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son, and your son's son, all the days of your life; and that your days may be prolonged.* Obedience to God should arise from the fear of Him, or from a holy awe of God felt in the heart—for all true religion must be heart work. It is not the bare action, alone, at which God looks, but at the motive—at the spirit which dictates it, hence it is always put, “That you might fear the Lord, your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments.” Neither are we to be content with keeping commands ourselves. It is the duty of parents to seek the good of their children—to seek that the son and the son's son should walk in the ways of God all their lives. May God grant us never to be partakers of the spirit of those who think that they have no need to look after the religion of their children—who seem as if they left it to a blind fate. May we care for them with this care that our son and our son's son should walk before the Lord all the days of their life!

3. *Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with you and that you may increase mightily, as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you, in the land that flows with milk and honey.* It seems, according to the Old Covenant, that temporal prosperity was appended as a blessing to the keeping of God's commandments. It has been sometimes said that while prosperity was the blessing of the Old Covenant, adversity is the blessing of the New. There is some truth in that statement, for whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and yet is it true that the best thing for a man is that he should walk in the commands of God. There is a sense in which we do make the best of both worlds when we seek the love of God. When we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, other things are added to us so that it is not without meaning to us that the Lord here promises temporal blessings to His people.

4. *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.* This is the great Doctrine that we learn, both from the Old and the New Testament—there is one Lord. And this great Truth of God has been burnt into the Jews by their long chastisement and, whatever other mistakes they make, you never find them making a mistake about this! The Lord your God is one Lord. May we always be kept from all idolatry—from all worship of anything except the living God. The sacred Unity of the Divine Trinity may we evermore hold fast.

5. *And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.* It is not a little love that God de-

serves, nor is it a little love that He will accept. He blesses us with all His heart and all His might—and after that fashion are we to love Him.

6, 7. *And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart. And you shall teach them diligently unto your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up.* The Word of God is not for some particular place called a Church or a Meeting House. It is for all places, all times and all occupations. I wish that we had more of this talking over of God's Word when we sit by the way, or when we walk.

8. *And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.* With you in all your actions—with you in all your thoughts—conspicuously with you—not out of ostentation, but through your obedience to become apparent unto all men.

9-12 *And you shall write them upon the posts of your house, and on your gates. And it shall be, when the LORD your God shall have brought you into the land which He swore unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you great and goodly cities which you built not. And the houses full of all good things which you filled not, and wells dug which you dug not, vineyards and olive trees which you planted not, when you shall have eaten and are full, then beware lest you forget the LORD, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.* Pride is the peculiar sin of prosperity—and pride stands side by side with forgetfulness of God. Instead of remembering from where our mercies came, we begin to thank ourselves for these blessings—and God is forgotten. I remember one of whom it was said that he was a self-made man and he adored his creator. And I may say that there are a great many persons who do just that! They believe that they have made themselves and so they worship themselves! Be it ours to remember that it is God who gives us strength to get wealth or to get position and, therefore, unto Him be all the honor of it, and never let Him be forgotten.

13-15. *You shall fear the LORD your God, and serve Him, and shall swear by His name. You shall not go after other gods or the gods of the people which are round about you: (For the LORD your God is a jealous God among you).* He will have the heart all to Himself. Two gods He cannot endure. Of false gods, there may be many—of the true God there can be but One—and He is a jealous God.

15-19. *Lest the anger of the LORD your God be kindled against you, and destroy you from off the face of the earth. You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted Him in Massah. You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and His testimonies and His statutes, which He has commanded you. And you shall do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, to cast out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has spoken.* Now, this Covenant of Works they break, as we also have long ago broken ours. Blessed be God, our salvation now hangs on another Covenant which cannot fail nor break down—the Covenant of

Grace! Yet, still, now that we have become the Lord's children, we are put under the discipline of the Lord's house, and these words might not set forth what is the discipline of the Lord's house towards His own children, namely, that He does bless us when we walk in His ways, and that He will walk contrary to us if we walk contrary to Him. He keeps a rod in His house, and in very love He uses that upon His best beloved ones. "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for your iniquities." He will not kill His children, nor treat them as a judge treats a criminal, for they are not under the Law, but under Grace. But He will chasten them and treat them as a father chastens his child—out of love. Oh, that we might have Grace to walk before Him with a holy, childlike fear, so that we may always walk in the light of His Countenance!

20-23. *And when your son asks you in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statues, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you? Then you shall say unto your son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And the LORD showed signs and wonders great and sore upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household before our eyes. And He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He swore unto our fathers. And cannot we tell our children what God has done for us—how He brought us out of our spiritual captivity, and how in His almighty love He has brought us into His Church and will surely bring us into the glory above? May God grant us Grace to speak about these things without diffidence, but with great confidence to tell our children of what He has done.*

—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.**

REMEMBER!

NO 1406

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 31, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“You shall remember that you were a bondman in the land of Egypt,
and the Lord your God redeemed you.”
Deuteronomy 15:15.***

IN an autobiography of William Jay we read that on one occasion he called to see the famous Mr. John Newton, at Olney, and he observed that over the desk at which he was accustomed to compose his sermons, he had written up in very large letters the following words—“Remember that you were a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you.” To my mind this story invests the text with considerable interest—it was most fitting that such a remarkable convert as he should dwell upon such a theme and place such a text conspicuously before his eyes. Might it not with great propriety be placed in a similar position by each one of us?

Mr. Newton lived and acted under the influence of the memory which the text commands, as was seen that very morning in his conversation with Mr. Jay. “Sir,” said Mr. Newton, “I am glad to see you, for I have a letter just come from Bath and you can, perhaps, assist me in the answer to it. Do you know anything of So-and-So (mentioning the name)?” Mr. Jay replied that the man was an awful character, had once been a hearer of the Gospel, but had become a leader in every vice. “But, Sir,” said Mr. Newton, “He writes very penitently and who can tell? Perhaps a change may have come over him.” “Well,” said Mr. Jay, “I can only say that if ever he should be converted, I should despair of no one.” “And I,” said Mr. Newton, “have never despaired of anybody since I was, myself, converted.”

So, you see, as he thought of this poor sinner at Bath, he was remembering that he, also, was a bondman in the land of Egypt and the Lord his God had redeemed him. And why should not the same redemption reach even to this notorious transgressor and save him? The memory of his own gracious change of heart and life gave him tenderness in dealing with the erring and hope with regard to their restoration. May some such good effect be produced in our minds—we are not all called to be preachers of the Gospel, but in any capacity a holy, beneficial, sanctifying effect will be produced upon a right mind by remembering that we were bondmen, but the Lord our God redeemed us. May the Holy Spirit, at this hour, bring the amazing Grace of God to our remembrance with melting power!

As to the particular fact of the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, great care was taken that it should be remembered. The month upon which they came out was made the commencement of the year. “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you” (Exo. 12:2). A special injunction was issued, “Observe the

month of Abib and keep the Passover unto the Lord your God: for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you forth out of Egypt by night." An ordinance was established on purpose that the deliverance might be commemorated—and the eating of the Passover lamb was made binding upon the whole of the people—so that they should not forget the sprinkling of the blood.

The Word of the Lord ordained, saying, "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and you shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever." They were enjoined, also, to instruct their children concerning it, so that in addition to a ceremonial there was an *oral* tradition to be handed from father to son. "And when your son asks you in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God has commanded you? Then you shall say unto your son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand" (Deut. 6:20, 21).

Their law of the Ten Commandments commenced with a reminder of that remarkable fact—"I am the Lord your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage: you shall have no other gods before Me." All through the book of Deuteronomy you will observe that this is the one weighty and oft repeated argument for obedience and faithfulness—"Remember that you were a bondman in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you." Now, Beloved, if the Jew was so carefully instructed to remember his deliverance out of Egypt, should not we, also, take heed to ourselves that we by no means forget, or cast into the background, our yet *greater* redemption through the precious blood of Christ by which we were set free from the yoke and bondage of sin? See how Paul, in Ephesians 2:11, 12, 13, speaks to us who have been called by Grace from the ends of the earth—"Why remember, that you being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ."

He puts the same thought into other words in Romans 6:17, 18, when he says—"God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness." Paul would have us remember our redemption. And God the Holy Spirit who spoke by Paul would have us remember it! Will we not give earnest heed to such solemn counsels? The blessed effects that will flow from such a memory urge us to remember it and because of this our discourse of this morning is intended to be a humble assistance towards such a memory.

O my Brothers and Sisters, forget all else, just now, and give your heart to the work before you and, "remember that you were a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you." First, then, let us

consider our bondage. Secondly, our redemption. And thirdly, the influence of the memory of the two facts. I shall not try to say anything fresh or new—it would be out of place to attempt it, for my present duty is to awaken your memories as to former days. I have only to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. He who is only a remembrancer for the past must not look about for novelties. We speak what you know and ask you to testify to what you have felt.

I. First let us consider OUR BONDAGE. It was exceedingly like the bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt. There are many points in which a parallel might be drawn. We will indicate them in a few words. First, when we were unregenerate and sold under sin, we were enslaved to a mighty power against which we could not contend. It would have been of no use for the Israelites to have commenced an insurrection against Pharaoh—he was too firmly established upon the throne and his soldiers by far too strong for poor, feeble, shepherd tribes to be able to resist. They scarcely dared to *think* of such a thing and, Brethren, if fallen man single-handedly had the heart to contend with sin and Satan, he would certainly be unable to achieve a victory.

The Fall has left us “without strength.” The Law, with all its force, is “weak through the flesh.” Alas, man has no heart for spiritual liberty, otherwise the Lord would lend him power. But apart from Divine power, what man can break loose from his sin? Shall the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then shall he that is accustomed to do evil learn to do well, unassisted by Divine strength! No, Brothers and Sisters, the fetters which enchain the mind of the carnal man are much too strong for him to snap them. He may resolve to do so, as in moments of reflection some men do, but, alas, he is soon weary of the struggle for liberty and resigns himself to his prison.

If man had been capable of his own redemption, there would never have descended from Heaven the Divine Redeemer, but because the bondage was all too dire for man to set himself free, therefore the eternal Son of God came here that He might save His people from their sins. Our natural bondage was caused and maintained by a power tremendous in energy and craft. The Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience, held us beneath his iron sway and sin exercised a tyrannical dominion over us from which we could not break.

Worse still, we were like the Israelites in another respect. Our slavery had so degraded us that we had no heart to desire an escape! One of the worst points of slavery is that it frequently degrades men into contentment with their condition. That would be thought by some to be a benefit, but it is a giant evil, for a man has no right to be satisfied in slavery. Such contentment is an ensign of debased manhood. Freedom is the *right* of every human being and he is not truly a man if he can be happy in bondage.

The Israelites were so trampled down that they crouched at their oppressors' feet and made themselves as content as they could in their enslaved condition. As they were turned into beasts of burden, so were their minds brutalized until their chief joy lay in the onions and the cucumbers

with which they refreshed themselves—and the fish of which they later spoke so longingly. They declined from a thoughtful family into a clan of groveling laborers without heart or hope, so that when Moses went to them, the first time, he was not received. And when he was sent of God with his brother, Aaron, the people at the first hour of conflict shrank into their former cowardice and would willingly have remained slaves sooner than excite Pharaoh's wrath.

They had been ground down so terribly with their hard labor in mortar and in brick that they scarcely dared to think of freedom—and that was just your case and mine, beloved Friends—we, too, were willing slaves of death and sin. If we are free this morning it was not because when left to ourselves we fought for liberty and refused to wear a fetter. No, our bonds were on our hearts and we chose our own degradation. The slave from the south, of old, watched the northern star and followed it through brake, swamp and forest to obtain his liberty, but our eyes refused to look to Jesus, who is the Star of Freedom. We boasted that we were born free and were never in bondage to any man and so we most effectually proved our bondage under our own pride.

We, perhaps, called ourselves freethinkers and, at any rate we meant to be free actors, yet, all the while we were in bondage and did not care to seek true liberty. Can you not remember when you hugged your chains and kissed your bonds—and like a madman who crowns himself with a wisp of straw and calls himself a king—embraced the foolish pleasures of this world and thought yourselves supremely blessed in such base enjoyments? Remember again, dear Brothers and Sisters, that you were in a bondage similar to that of Egypt, for while in that condition you toiled hard and found that all the service wherein Satan made you to serve was with rigor.

The Israelites built treasure cities for Pharaoh and they are supposed to have erected some of the pyramids. But their wage was very small and their taskmasters were brutal. Laborers engaged upon royal works received no wages, but were simply served with sufficient bread to keep them alive. The Israelites were called upon to make an enormous quantity of bricks and, at last, the chopped straw, which was necessary to make the clay bind together, which had been given out of the royal granaries, was refused them and they were bid to go over all the land to hunt up what they could of stubble instead of straw—thus their labor was increased beyond all bearing.

Could not many a sinner tell of horrible nights and woeful mornings when under the power of his passions? Who has woe? Who has redness of the eyes? Who is filled with dread of death? Who flees when no man pursues? Of all tyrants sin and Satan are the most cruel! How are men worn out in the devil's destructive service! What an expense does sin entail! It is a costly thing for many, to obey their own vices! They are impoverished by their passions. Those who complain if they are pressed for subscriptions to holy causes should consider how much more they would have spent in the pleasures of the world. Why, men squander fortunes upon their frivolities or upon their lusts—and encumber future generations to indulge a

vice which ruins their health, destroys their reputation and sends them to an early grave!

If you will have your own way, that way will be the hardest you can choose. It does not matter in what position a man may be, whether rich or poor, illiterate and fond of the more vulgar pleasures, or tutored and educated and prone to more fashionable vices—sin leads on to hard service everywhere—and its exactions increase from day to day. If men were but in their senses, drunkenness, gambling, gluttony, wantonness and many other vices would be *punishments* rather than pleasures—and yet they live in them! There was a time, dear Brethren, when, in addition to our hard toil, our bondage brought us misery.

Do you remember when you dared not think a day's conduct over for the life of you? When if you had been compelled to sit down and review your own character it would have been an intolerable task? I recollect, also, when a sense of sin came over me and then, indeed, my life was made bitter with hard bondage. I labored to set up a righteousness of my own, for I could not yield to the righteousness of Christ. That was laboring as in the very fire! I strove by my own good works to accomplish my own salvation and tried by prayers and tears to pay the debt I owed to God, but all in vain. I was sinning all the while by refusing Christ and endeavoring to rival my Savior.

So far I speak for myself, but I know that you have done the same. Do you remember, Brothers and Sisters, when your pleasures ceased to be pleasures? When all the amusements of the world lost their flavor and became flat, stale, nauseous and you turned away and asked in vain for something that would content you? Do you remember when at last you saw yourself in your true condition and bewailed yourself before the living God as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn? Ah, then you felt like Israel in Egypt when they sighed and cried by reason of the bondage!

And, blessed be God, the parallel runs further, for in your case, also, God heard the groaning and remembered His covenant (Exo. 2:24). All this while our enemy was aiming at our destruction! This was what Pharaoh was driving at with Israel—he intended to cut off the nation by severe tasks, or at least to reduce its strength. As his first policy did not succeed, he set about to destroy the male children. And even so, Satan, when he has men under his power, labors by all means to utterly destroy them, for nothing short of this will satisfy him! Every hopeful thought he would drown in the river of despair, lest by any means the man should shake off his yoke. The total overthrow of the soul of man is the aim of the great enemy. What a mercy to have been redeemed out of the hand of the enemy!

And like Israel in Egypt, we were in the hands of a power that would not let us go. There came a voice by Moses which said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord, Let My people go," but Pharaoh's answer was, "I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." And such was the language of our corruptions! Such the language of the devil who had dominion over us. "I will not let you go," said the fierce Prince of Darkness and, like a strong armed man, he kept his goods in peace. You remember that telling sermon which thrilled you and awoke in you desires for liberty? You recollect

how there seemed to ring in the halls of your nature the resounding voice, "Let my people go"?

But you did not go, for that slavish will of yours held you in bondage. Your sins captivated you! Then came the reading of the Scriptures, or a mother's exhortation, or another earnest sermon and again the voice was heard, "Thus says the Lord, Let My people go." You began to feel uneasy in your condition and to venture somewhat into the border country, but you could not escape—the iron had entered into your soul—your heart was captive. Blessed was the day when the strong armed man that kept you as a man keeps his house was overcome by a stronger than he and cast out forever! Then Jesus took possession of your nature, never to leave it, but to hold His tenancy world without end! Glory be to God, we were bondmen in Egypt, but the Lord our God redeemed us—let His name be praised!

I would assist you still further to remember that bondage. It cannot be hard for some of you to do so, for you are "from Egypt lately come." Some of you have been set free, now, these 20 years, some perhaps these 50 years! But it cannot be difficult for you to remember what must be so indelibly impressed upon you. I can imagine, 30 years after coming out of Egypt, some of the gray fathers who had crossed the Red Sea telling their sons the sad story of the bondage in Egypt. "I, your father," one of them would say, "was beaten with rods by the taskmaster because when I had made up my full tale of bricks I was required to make twice as many. I toiled far into the night at brick-making, but I could not accomplish the task—and I remember how the blows descended upon my back like burning hail. Look here, my son," he would say, as he stripped himself to show the scars, "these are the memorials of Egyptian bondage."

Ah, glory be to God, we are free! No more do we carry clanking chains upon our souls—but we still bear the old scars about us. Sometimes the old temper rises, or the old lusts flame up. When a man has had a bone broken, it may have been well set and he has, for the most part, forgotten the problem, yet, in bad weather I have heard it said, "The old bone talks a bit." And, alas, the bones we broke by our sins will talk a bit at times—and their talk is a sad reminder of our former state. Snatches of ill songs, recollections of old lusts and I know not what besides, are scars which remind us that we were bondmen in Egypt!

Many a mother that came out of Egypt when she looked at her boy would say, "And I might have been the joyful mother of seven sons, but they were one after another snatched from my bosom by the remorseless servant of the Egyptian tyrant and put to death." With her joy for what was left her would be mingled sorrow for what she had lost. Yes, and in your families it may be your younger children have been brought under religious influences, but your older sons are as irreligious as you were when they were lads at home. Many are led to think of their own evil example in former years as they see their wayward sons persevering in sin.

As you think of them you may say, "I see my bondage in my son. I see my sin repeated in my child." These are mournful memorials of our carnal state. But, indeed, I need not thus remind you, for everything may refresh

your memories as to your former bondage. Is it not so? The task set before you in the text is an easy one and I charge you, therefore, remember that you were once bondmen in Egypt.

II. In the second place, we have to think of the blessed fact of OUR REDEMPTION—"The Lord your God redeemed you." Here again there is a parallel. He redeemed us first by *price*. Israel in Egypt was an unransomed nation. God claimed that nation to be His firstborn. As it is written, "Sanctify unto Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is Mine." That portion had been His claim from the first. And the Law was afterwards carried out by the setting apart of the Levitical tribe to take the place of the firstborn—but Israel in Egypt had never set apart its firstborn at all—and was, therefore an unredeemed people.

How was all that indebtedness to be made up? The nation must be redeemed by a price and that price was set forth by the symbol of a lamb which was killed, roasted and eaten, while the blood was smeared upon the lintel and the two side posts. Beloved, you and I have been redeemed with blood! Blessed Lord Jesus, "You were slain and have redeemed us unto God by Your blood." "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." You cannot, you must not, you shall not forget this. You were bondmen, but Jesus your Lord redeemed you. He took your nature and was thus next of kin to you—and it became His right to redeem you, which right He has exercised to His own cost but to your eternal gain.

The price by which you were set free He counted down in a wondrous coinage, minted from His own heart. The ransom is paid and the Jubilee trumpet proclaims that you and your heavenly possessions are now delivered from all mortgage and encumbrance through the blood of Jesus Christ. Remember that with a great price you have obtained this freedom. The Lord says, "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you." But there would not have been a coming out of Egypt unless there had been a display of power as well as a payment of price—for with a high hand and an outstretched arm the Lord brought forth His people.

There are always two redemptions to every man who is saved—redemption by price and redemption by power. You know what power God put forth in the land of Egypt when He worked all His plagues in the field of Zoan. But that was nothing compared with the power of Christ when He broke the head of the old dragon! When He utterly destroyed the kingdom of sin and led our captivity captive! Greater than Moses' rod were Christ's pierced hands! He has done it! He has done it! Our tyrant has no more power to hold us in chains, for Christ has vanquished him forever!

Another form of redemption was also seen by Israel, namely, in the *power* exerted over themselves. I think sufficient stress has never been laid upon this. That they should have been willing to come out of Egypt was no small thing—universally willing so that not a single person remained behind—so unanimous and so eager were they to come out of Egypt, though almost rooted to the soil, that a number of Egyptians came

up with them. According to the word of Moses, “Not a hoof shall be left behind,” they all left the land and neither sheep, nor goat, nor ox—much less man, woman, or child—remained.

Israel was glad to come out and even Egypt was glad when they departed. It is wonderful that they were all able to come out of Egypt. There was never an army, yet, but what had some sick in it—the ambulance and the hospital are always needed—but of this grand army we are told, “He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.” Marvelous display of power was this! And so, Beloved, we will tell it to the praise of God this day that He *made us willing* to come out of the Egypt of our sin to which we were rooted! And *making us willing* He made us *able*, too! The power of the Spirit came upon us and the might of His Grace overshadowed us and we did arise and come to our Father. Let Grace have all the glory!

Shall I need to press upon you, then, to let your minds fly back to the time when you realized your redemption and came up out of the land of Egypt? It was a Divine interposition. “The Lord your God redeemed you.” And it was personally experienced, for, “The Lord your God redeemed *you*.” It was a matter of clear consciousness to your own soul. You were a bondman—you knew it and felt it—the Lord your God redeemed you and you know it and feel that, also! You know it as much as a galley slave would know it if he no more tugged the oar! As much as the captive who has pined away in the dungeon through weary years would know it when once more he breathed the air and felt that he was free!

“You were a bondman, and the Lord your God redeemed you.” There can be no doubt about it! Satan himself could not make some of us doubt it! The chains were so real and the liberty so delightful! It was a mental phenomenon for which there can be no accounting except upon this belief—that the Lord our God, Himself, came and set us free!

III. Thus, Brothers and Sisters, I have set before you the subject for your memory. I shall now try to show you THE INFLUENCE WHICH THIS DOUBLE MEMORY OUGHT TO HAVE UPON YOU. We should naturally conclude, without any reference to Scripture, that if a Christian man kept always in mind his former and his present state, it would render him humble. You have been preaching and God has blessed you to the conversion of many—do you feel elated? “Remember that you were a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you.”

You are getting on in knowledge and your character is evidently much improved. Your inner life is full of peace and comfort. Do you feel as if you were some great one? Do not play the fool! You are less than nothing! Remember that you were a poor miserable slave—brown, sun-dried, smoke-tinged—and that not long ago! You would have been in Hell if it had not been for Sovereign Grace! Or if not there, perhaps you would have been among drunkards and swearers, and lewd men and women, or at least among the proud, self-righteous Pharisees. When you are honored of the Lord and happy in the full assurance of faith, remember that you were a bondman—walk humbly with your God.

In the next place, be grateful. If you have not all the temporal mercies that you would desire, yet you have received the choicest of all mercies—liberty through Jesus Christ—therefore be cheerful, happy and thankful. Remember that you were a bondman and if you have but little of this world's goods, be thankful for the great *spiritual* blessing you have received in being set free from the galling yoke. Do not receive such a liberty as this without blessing those dear, pierced hands which was nailed to the tree that you might be delivered! Let gratitude abound, as you remember the wormwood and the gall.

Being grateful, be patient, too. If you are suffering or ailing, or if sometimes your spirits are cast down, or if you are poor and despised, yet say to yourself, "Why should I complain? My lot may seem difficult, yet it is nothing in comparison with what it would have been if I had been left a prisoner in the land of Egypt! Thank God I am no longer in bondage to my sins." The slave of the sad times in America would leap on the Canadian shore! And though he came there with all his earthly goods wrapped up in his handkerchief and knew not where his next meal would come from, yet he would spring upon the shore, dance for joy and say, "Thank God, I am free! I am penniless, but *free!*" How much more, then, may you, whatever your suffering or sorrow may be, exclaim, "Thank God! I was a bondman, but the Lord my God has redeemed me, and I will be patient, whatever I am called to bear."

Next, be hopeful. What may you not yet become? "It does not yet appear what we shall be." You were a bondman, but Divine Grace has set you free! Who knows what the Lord may yet make of you? Is there anything that He cannot, will not do for one whom He has already redeemed by His blood? He has set you free from sin! Oh, then, He will keep you from falling and preserve you to the end. "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Are you thus hopeful? Then be zealous! Here earnestness should find both fire and fuel—we were bondmen, but the Lord has redeemed us. What, then, can be too hard for us to undertake for His sake? We must give all to Him who has purchased us to Himself and we must continue to do so as long as we live.

John Newton persisted in preaching even when he was really incapable of it, for he said "What? Shall the old African blasphemer leave off preaching Jesus Christ while there is breath in his body? No, never!" He felt that he must continue to bear testimony, for our text was always before him, "Remember that you were a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you."

But now kindly follow me while I, as briefly as I can, show you the Lord's own use of this remembrance. And the first text I shall quote will be found in Deuteronomy 5:14. This is what He says—"The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your ox, nor your ass, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates; that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you. And remember that you were a servant in the

land of Egypt, and that the Lord your God brought you out of there through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.”

You were a bondman. What would you have given for rest? Now that the Lord has given you this hallowed day of rest, guard it sacredly. When you were a bondman you knew the heart of a servant and you sighed because your toil was heavy. Now that you are set free, if you have servants, think of them and so order your household that they may, as much as possible, enjoy their Sabbath. Certain household duties must be performed, but plot and plan to make these as light as possible, “that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you.” If you meet with any that are in bondage of soul and cannot rest, obey the text in its spiritual teaching.

Rest in the Lord Jesus yourself, but endeavor to bring all your family into the same peace, “that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you.” Surely if you have been set free from the iron bondage you ought not to need urging to keep, with all sacredness, this holy day which the mercy of God has hedged about! Nor should you need exhorting to rest in the Lord and to endeavor to lead others into His rest.

In Deuteronomy 7 we have another use of this remembrance. Here the chosen people are commanded to keep separate from the nations. They were not to intermarry with the Canaanites nor make alliances with them. Israel was to be separated, even as Moses said, “you are a holy people unto the Lord your God.” And the reason he gives in the 8th verse is this—“The Lord redeemed you out of the house of bondmen.” Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if we are redeemed from among men. If there is a special and particular redemption, as we believe, by which Christ loved His Church and gave Himself for it, then as the specially blood-bought ones, we are under solemn obligations to come out from the world and to be separate from it. Did not Jesus say of His redeemed, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world”? Therefore come you out from among them and be you separate.

In the 8th chapter, redemption is used as an argument for obedience, and they are exhorted not to forget the laws and statutes of the Lord. And above all they are warned, lest in the midst of prosperity their heart should be lifted up so as to forget the Lord their God who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. The same argument runs through the 11th chapter and it is a very clear one. We ought to render glad obedience to Him who has worked us so great a deliverance! We find in the 13th chapter that the redemption from bondage is used as an argument for loyal attachment to the one and only God.

The tendency of the nation was to idolatry, since all the countries round about had many gods and lords—but the Lord commanded His people to put to death all prophets and dreamers of dreams who might seek to lead them away from the worship of Jehovah. “You shall stone him with stones that he dies,” says the 10th verse, “because he has sought to thrust you away from the Lord your God *who brought you out of the land*

of Egypt, from the house of bondage.” You must not have another God, for no other God delivered you—worship Him to whom you owe your all.

Our own text is set in the following connection. If a man entered into forced servitude, or came under any bonds to his fellow man among the Jews, he could only be held for six years. In the seventh he was to go free. “And when you send him out free from you, you shall not let him go away empty: you shall furnish him liberally out of your flock and out of your flour, and out of your winepress: of that which the Lord your God has blessed you, you shall give unto him. And you shall remember that you were a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you.”

The Lord’s people should be considerate of those who are in their employment. The recollection of their own bondage should make them tender and kind to those who are in subservience to them and never should a Christian man be ungenerous, illiberal, severe, churlish with his servants, or with any who are dependent upon him. Be large-hearted! Do not be angry at every little fault, nor swift to observe every slight mistake. And be not forever standing on your exact rights, litigious, sticking out for the last half-farthing as some do.

I am almost sorry if a mean, stingy man gets converted, for I am afraid he will be no credit to Christianity. There should be in a man redeemed with the blood of Christ something like nobility of soul and benevolence to his fellow men. Even this stern Book of the Law teaches us this. I have no time except to remind you that they were bound to keep the Passover because of their deliverance from Egypt as we find in the 16th chapter at the 1st verse. “Observe the month of Abib and keep the Passover unto the Lord your God: for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you forth out of Egypt by night.”

So let us, also, take heed unto ourselves that we keep all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly. Let us keep the ordinances as they were delivered unto us and neither alter nor misplace them. Hold fast the Truth of God and be not moved from it by the cunning craftiness of men. Walk according to the teaching of Scripture in all things, keeping the good old way, because the Lord our God redeemed us and His Truth is unchangeable. Again, in the 16th chapter, verses 10 to 12, you have the great redemption used as an argument for liberality towards the cause of God. They were to give unto the Lord rejoicingly of that which the Lord had given to them. “Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you.”

And that because of the 12th verse, “You shall remember that you were a bondman in Egypt: and you shall observe and do these statutes.” In the 26th chapter the same teaching is reduced to a set form, for they were there commanded to bring each one a basket of first fruits and offer it unto the Lord, saying—“The Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders. And He has brought us into this place, and has given us this land, even a land that flows with milk and honey.

And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land, which You, O Lord, have given me.”

Need I, even for a moment, impress this duty upon you? Last of all, in the 24th chapter there remains one more lesson. We are there exhorted to be careful concerning the fatherless and the widow (Deut. 24:17). A generous spirit was to be exhibited towards the poor. They were not to fetch in all their sheaves from the field if any were forgotten, nor to scrape up every single ear of corn from among the stubble, as some do these days, nor to beat their olive trees twice, nor to gather the grapes of their vineyard a second time. Rather, they were to leave something for the poor! This was the argument—When you were in Egypt, when you had to make bricks without straw, how glad you were to turn your children in among the stubble to gather a few ears to make a loaf of bread. And now the Lord has given you a better land, therefore deal well with the poor.

Brethren, let the needy never be forgotten by you! Do not be miserly. Do not imitate those farmers who would comb their fields with a small-toothed comb if they could—sooner than the poor should glean—raking it and raking it again and again! No, the ransomed Israelites were not even to pick all their fruit, for the argument was, “Would not you, when in Egypt, have given *anything* for a bunch of those grapes which grew in the gardens of the rich?” Think, therefore, of the poor and deal kindly with them, even as you would wish others to deal with you.

With this I close. Be thoughtful of all your fellow men. You that have been redeemed with price, be you tender-hearted, full of compassion, merciful. In spiritual things take care that you never rake the corners of your fields. Do not rob the Gospel of its sweetness. There is a class of preaching out of which the last ear of wheat has been taken. Their Gospel is criticized into nothing. The skeptical commentators come in and pick nearly every bunch of grapes and then the modern-thought gentry devour the rest!

The preaching of modern times is as an olive tree beaten till not a trace of fruit remains. Let it not be so with us, but let the preacher say, “I was a bondman and therefore I will drop handfuls on purpose for poor souls in trouble.” Brothers and Sisters, be very considerate to seekers. Look them up. Talk to them after the sermon. Say a word to those sitting in your pew which may encourage their poor trembling hearts to lay hold on Jesus Christ.

Remember that you were a bondman—the smell of the brick kiln is upon you now, my Brother, my Sister—you have not yet cleansed all the clay from your hands with which you did work in mortar and in brick. Then do not become selfish, unloving, unkind, but in all things love your neighbor as yourself and so prove that you love the Lord your God with all your heart. God bless you. Amen.

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***“And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lends anything unto his neighbor shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbor, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD’S release.”
Deuteronomy 15:2.***

THIS wonderful transaction of “the Lord’s release” came at the end of every seven years. It was according to the gracious Law of God for Israel that there should be, first of all, a rest one day in seven. Next, there were feast days one month in seven—and then there came, every seventh *year*, a year of rest for the land in which they did not till it, but left it to lie fallow. Then after the seven sevens were complete, there came on the 50th year, an extraordinary year of rest, in addition to the usual one—this was called the Year of Jubilee.

I believe that there is a spiritual meaning in this succession of rests, but I have not time to enter upon the explanation of it now, except to say that, doubtless, that last seven of sevens represents the restitution of all things, when the Lord Jesus shall have gathered His people in to rest forever and ever with Himself in His Glory. Till then, we go from seven to seven every week—our Sabbaths are so many staves of the golden ladder by which we climb up to the eternal Sabbath. We bless God that we still retain, at least, that vestige of the seven, for blessed are our eyes that they see, and our hearts that they enjoy the one day of rest every week! What would we do without it?

Once, then, in seven years, there was a year of perfect rest. And I cannot help remarking, again, as I did in the reading, what happy people the chosen people would have been if they had but listened to God’s commands! Only imagine a country where, for a whole year, there would be nothing to do. The land would bring forth her own fruit and everybody might eat of it, sitting under his own vine and fig tree, having no tillage of the field or pruning of the vine, but having an opportunity given to him of spending the whole year in the service and worship of the Most High! When the people afterwards revolted from the Lord and desired a king to reign over them, He told them by the mouth of the Prophet Samuel the manner of the king whom they would choose, so that they might know the difference between the Lord’s rule and their king’s. The earthly monarchs would ground them down, oppress them and bring them into all manner

of bondage—and it came to pass! But the Lord's yoke was only this—that they should rest and serve Him here and enjoy Him forever hereafter.

These high privileges were attended, in the case of the people of Israel, with high spiritual commands. The laws given to Israel were not intended for Moabites, Edomites and Egyptians. They could not have understood them—they would probably have laughed at them. But the spiritually-minded among God's chosen people—and there were some such—would delight in these commands and obey them. Look at the command in the present chapter, that any Israelite who had sold his liberty to a brother Hebrew, should go free at the end of six years. It was a strange command, a blessedly generous one—but it was added that he should not go out empty but that he should be furnished with abundant help from the flock, from the threshing floor and from the winepress—and that he who gave him this fresh start in life should not do it grudgingly. The Hebrew has it, "Loading him, he shall be loaded; you shall adorn his neck with your gifts." He was to have an abundance given to him and this was to be done cheerfully, not grudgingly! A delight was to be felt in thus setting free a brother of the chosen race and starting him, once more, on the journey of life. It is a grand command!

Do you not think that it should always be so, that they who receive much should have much required of them? And that they who serve a generous God should be, themselves, generous? Is there not reason in that precept of the Savior, "Freely you have received, freely give"? May not the Lord expect of us much more than He does of others? If you are chosen out of mankind, redeemed from among men, called out from the fallen mass, quickened with a life which they do not know and privileged with access to God and communion with Heaven to which they are strangers, should not the Law of God's House be a higher and a nobler one than a law that could be given to those who are strangers to Him and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel? Do not, therefore, if you are Christians, measure yourselves with others, and say, "If I do as much as my neighbor does, it suffices." You who are of the blood royal of Heaven, princes in God's Kingdom—will you behave yourselves like paupers? You who have been redeemed with blood, whose every fetter has been struck off—will you act like slaves? Let it not be so! Rise to your true dignity! Act worthy of your privileges and accept with joy a Law of your Father and your King which others cannot understand and which they would think unreasonable and impracticable! It was so with the laws which were given to these people. It is true that, on one side of them, they were somewhat toned down in certain respects to suit their weaknesses, but in other respects they were heightened and elevated above what any human legislature would ever have thought of enacting.

However, that is not my subject tonight. I want to speak to you about the Lord's release.

It seems to me that this passage, first of all, teaches us concerning the release which the Lord desired His people to give. But, secondly, and typically, it speaks to us of the release which the Lord, Himself, gives to *us*. He does not command us to do what He will not much more abundantly

do Himself! “Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.” Your Lawgiver is, Himself, an example of the fulfillment of every gracious and noble precept in His own Law.

I. First, then, let us consider THE RELEASE WHICH THE LORD DESIRED HIS PEOPLE TO GIVE.

First, they were to forgive their debtors. They were, at the end of every seven years, to release every man, his debtor, from the debt which he had accumulated. I suppose that as soon as the year began, there was a release given. A man might pay if he could—and he *should* do so. A man might, at some future time, if his circumstances altered, discharge the debt which had been remitted, but as far as the *creditor* was concerned, it was remitted. It is the opinion of some commentators that it only signifies that the man was to be let alone during that year, but the debt still remained. I do not think that such an interpretation would have occurred to anybody who read the chapter by itself. You can take the idea to the chapter and foist it upon it, if you like, but it certainly is not there in the natural run of the words. All the Jewish interpreters, albeit that they often twisted their laws, are agreed upon this—it was an absolute forgiveness of the debt incurred which was intended here—and I will not give our Jewish brethren any blame for being too lenient in money matters.

I think, perhaps, that they may be a little inclined the other way, and if their Rabbis all teach that this was an absolute wiping out of the debt, I think that, for once, I must agree with their Rabbis and accept their interpretation, as it evidently is the plain meaning of the passage. I am no learned man and, therefore, I read the passage as it stands. I think that the Lord would have the creditor at the end of six years absolutely wipe out the debt! And I am more certain of it because He anticipates the objection that many would begin to say, “The year of release is at hand,” and would, therefore, refuse to lend. Many of them who were what is called, prudent, and who were inclined towards hard-heartedness, would naturally say, “No, we are not going to make a loan when it is so near the time when it will have to be forgiven and the loan will become a gift.” Hence the Lord says, “Beware that there be not a thought in your wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand, and your eyes be evil against your poor brother, and you give him nothing.”

Oh, what a relief it must have been to the debtors! And when it was really done, what a comfort and lightness of heart it must have brought to the creditors, too, when they saw their poor brethren able to enjoy life, again, and no longer having their days darkened with the shadow of a heavy debt!

The next thing was that they were never to exact that debt again. Observe in the text, “He shall not exact it of his neighbor, or of his brother.” After that year he was to have no further claim. Or if he thought that he had a claim, he was never to use any legal means, or any kind of physical force, or any threats, to obtain what was due. It was to be regarded as *done with*, as far as any legal claim was concerned. The *moral* claim might remain—and the honest, upright-minded Israelite might take care that his brother Israelite should not lose anything through him. But, still, accord-

ing to the Divine Command, there was to be no exacting of it. My dear brother Williams, in his prayer, spoke of the generosity of God as seen in these commands and, depend upon it, none but a generous Lawgiver would have made such a law as this! It is noble-hearted, full of loving kindness and we could expect that none but a people in whose midst there was the daily sacrifice—in the midst of whom moved the High Priest of God—would be obedient to such a precept.

Observe next, that they were to do this for the Lord's sake "because it is called the Lord's release." They were to do it with an eye to a blessing from God! "For the Lord shall greatly bless you in the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance to possess it: only if you carefully listen to the voice of the Lord your God." It is not enough to do the correct thing—it must be done in a right spirit and with a pure motive. A good action is not wholly good unless it is done for the glory of God and because of the greatness and goodness of His holy name. It would ennoble an Israelite to give a release to one's debtor and say, "It is called the Lord's release," to act, as it were, as lieutenant of the great King of Kings! It will ennoble you to give a discharge, not in your own name, but in Christ's name, and for His sake, because you love Him. The most powerful motive that a Christian can have is this, "For Jesus' sake." You could not forgive the debt, perhaps, for your *brother's* sake—there may be something about him that would harden your heart. But can you do it for Jesus' sake? This is true charity, that holy love which is the choicest of the Graces of God! That text in John's first Epistle is not only, "We love Him because He first loved us," but many versions read it, "We love because He first loved us." Even our love towards men, when it flows out in acts of mercy and deeds of kindness, should spring from the fact that Christ first loved us.

And then, like the Israelites, we may look believingly to the gracious reward that God gives. We do not serve God for wages, but we still have respect unto the recompense of the reward, even as Moses had. We do not run like hirelings, but we have our eyes upon the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus. A Christian should often perform acts of kindness for which he may only meet ingratitude—acts of kindness to the unthankful and to the evil—in the full belief that there will come a day when Christ will accept such things as done unto Himself and will say, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink." This Law, given to Israel, is a Law given to *us* so far as the *motive* for keeping it is concerned. Let us do good unto all men, for God's Glory, for Christ's sake, and let us have an eye to that day when every holy action done unto the Lord shall receive a reward from Him.

Next, notice, as you read down the chapter, that they were not only to perform this kindness *once*, but they were to be ready to do it again. The creditor, who had absolved his debtor, once, must not begin to say to himself, "I shall not lend any more. This business of the seven years, this statute of limitations, makes a dead loss of it." No, if he thinks so, the ninth verse tells him that it is a thought in his wicked heart—"Beware

that there be not a thought in your wicked heart.” “In your heart of Belial”—so the Hebrew runs, as if such a thought brought him down from Israel to Belial, and made the man of God to be a loose man, a man who feared not Jehovah at all! Beloved, it is the part of Christians not to be weary in well-doing! And if they get no reward for what they have done from those to whom it is done, still to do the same again! Remember how gracious God is and how He gives to the unthankful and the evil and makes His rain to fall upon the field of the churl as well as upon the field of the most generous. He is good to *all* and His tender mercies are over all His works. We may carry the idea of only helping the worthy a great deal too far, till we cease to be imitators of Christ, and rather become dispensers of justice than of love—and this is not the work for a Christian man to do.

Next, observe, that while they were to forgive and remit, on this seventh year, the loans which remained unpaid, they were also to let the bondman go. He was a Hebrew, but he was so poor that he had sold his land and then, at last, he had been obliged to sell himself into slavery. “Take me,” he said, “and I will be your servant if you give me bread to eat, and clothes to put on.” And the Law of God allowed it and so there were some few Hebrews who had their fellow Hebrews in servitude to them. That servitude was of an exceedingly light kind, for if ever one of these so-called slaves ran away, it was contrary to the Law to return him to his master—he might break the servitude when he pleased. At the end of the sixth year, when the Hebrew servant might go free, it often happened that he had been treated so well in his servitude that he had no desire to go, but he was willing to have the awl thrust through the lobe of his ear that he might be fastened to the doorpost of his master to abide in servitude as long as he lived! But at the end of the six years, the Hebrew servant was free to go if so it pleased him.

Now, according to the Law of God, the bondman was to be sent away freely. It was not to be thought a hardship to part with a servant man or woman. However useful they might have been in the house or field, however much they were felt to be necessary to domestic comfort or farm service, they were to be allowed to go and, what was more, they were not to go empty-handed, but they were to receive a portion out of every department of the master’s wealth—from his flock, his threshing floor and his winepress. They were to go away well loaded, even as Israel went out of Egypt, as we read, “He brought them forth also with silver and gold.” This was a grand Law! And does it not teach God’s people how kind they ought to be? A miserable, miserly, hard, close-fisted Christian—is there such a thing? It is not for me to be a judge. One who would take his brother’s labor without payment and, at the end of the term would offer him no kind of remuneration, but leave him to starve—is he a child of God? How dwells the love of God in him? God would have His people not only do what is righteous, but what is generous! And act, not only justly, but kindly to all with whom they come in contact.

Further, *this setting free of their brother at the specified time was to be done for a certain reason*—“You shall remember that you were a bondman

in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you.” How can you hold another a bondman when God has set you free? How can you treat another with unkindness when the Lord has dealt so generously with you? Down at Olney, when Mr. Newton was the rector of the parish, he put up in his study this text where he could always see it when he lifted his eyes from his text while preparing his sermon, “Remember that you were a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you.” Would it not do many Christians good if they had that text often before their eyes? Would it not excite gratitude to their Redeemer and tenderness towards those who happened to be in subjection to them! Would it not excite tenderness to every sinner that is a bond slave under the Law of God, tenderness to the myriads that swarm these streets, slaves to sin and self, and who are perishing in their iniquity? This was to be the reason why Israel should act generously towards bondservants. Let it stand as a reason why we should act kindly towards all about us!

As far as most of us are concerned, it may be that we are not creditors to anybody, and we are not likely to crush anybody by exacting their debts. If we do not happen to be in that position, yet the Law is *spiritual* and it has its own teaching. And surely it means just this—Let us readily forgive. I know not how true it is, but I have heard that if that venerable and godly man, Mr. Rowland Hill, had any kind of fault, it was that, sometimes, when he thought that persons had acted very wrongly to him, he could not very readily forgive them. One of his hearers said he remembered that, one Sunday, Mr. Hill had spoken very severely about a certain person, not more severely than was just, but perhaps more severely than was *generous*, and when he was offering the prayer, “Forgive us our trespasses,” the hearer noticed that the good man hesitated at the words, “As we—as we—forgive them that trespass against us.” He had evidently a little struggle with himself and he was so sincere and transparent a man that he showed it even in the public service!

Do not some of you, at times, find it rather difficult to forgive those that trespass against you? Possibly you have been very angry with your boy this afternoon. It would have been as well to have given him a kiss before you left home. It may be that your dear girl has, in some way, offended you. It would have been as well to have told her that you had forgiven her. You had good reasons, perhaps, for not doing so. I will not go into them. However, may I ask you to forgive her as soon as you get home? It may be that you will be doing no good to your child by doing what is hardly justifiable as from yourself.

Be ready to forgive your children! There is reason to make that remark, for I have known persons sitting here who have excluded a son or daughter from their house because of some marriage that the parents did not like, or for some other reason. You said, “She shall never darken my door again.” And you are a Christian? I would say to you, if I knew you were here, “I wish that you would never darken the Communion Table, again, until that kind of feeling were gone from you once and for all!” How can you say, “Our Father, which are in Heaven,” while there is still towards your own child, whether young or old, something which you say you can-

not forgive? Make up your mind never to go to Heaven if you cannot forgive people! You cannot enter the pearly gates while you cherish an unforgiving spirit!

Or is it some friend of yours with whom you have quarreled? You two have parted. You were dear friends, once, but now, like a great cliff that has been split in the middle, there you stand frowning upon one another! Let it be so no longer! If there is any personal gripe or ill-will, let it be cast into the depths of the sea. Whatever may be the story, I do not want to hear it. Surely the time has come when all that should be wiped out, once and for all. "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," is a good precept. I have heard of two friends who had differed greatly and spoken very bitterly. And the sun was just going down, so one of them said, "I must not let the sun go down on my wrath. I will go and try to be reconciled to my friend." And half way to his friend's house, he met his friend coming to him, on the same errand, and they met joyfully to forgive each other! May it be so with all true Christians!

Once again, dear Friends, I think the spirit of this release of the Lord is this—Never be hard on anybody. It is true that the man made the bargain and he ought to keep to it, but he is losing money and he cannot afford it. He is being ruined and you are being fattened by his mistake. Do not hold him to it. If you have made a losing bargain, you should stand to it, for the Christian "swears to his own hurt, and changes not." But if the loss is on the other side, cancel the bond as speedily as may be and let not the poor man have to go with his tears before Almighty God and blame you for your cruelty. No Christian man can be a sweater of workers! No Christian can be a grinder of the poor! No man who would be accepted before God can think that his heart is right with him when he treats others ungenerously, not to say unjustly!

That, I think, is the spirit of the first part of my subject—the release which the Lord desired His people to give, that which is called, "the Lord's release."

II. But now, secondly, and as briefly as I can, let us consider THE RELEASE WHICH THE LORD GIVES TO US.

Let me proclaim to every sinner here who acknowledges his indebtedness to God and feels that he can never discharge it, that if you will come and put your trust in Christ, the Lord promises oblivion to all your debt, forgiveness of the whole of your sins! I need not repeat the long black list, for conscience has made you read it up and down and down and up, and you have become familiar with the roll of your iniquities. The Lord is prepared to wipe them all out! He will do what He bids His people do—"it is called the Lord's release." He will release you from your sins if you believe in Jesus Christ!

This release shall be followed up by a non-exacting of the penalty forever. If you are pardoned of God, He will never exact of you any punishment because of your iniquities or transgressions. No, neither in this life, nor in that which is to come will He require it at your hands. He will give you a full discharge—one that can be pleaded in the High Court of Heaven above! "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.” If you will come to your God, acknowledging your debt and confessing your inability to pay it, He will so wipe it out that you shall never hear of it again, forever! And if your sins are searched for, they shall not be found.

Notice, next, that God will do all this for you on the ground of your poverty. Look at the fourth verse—“Save when there shall be no poor among you.” They should not remit a debt if ever there should come a time when there should be no poor among them. But, as long as there was a man who was poor, they were to remit the debt. You noticed how we sang—

***“Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large.”***

When you cannot pay half a farthing in the pound of all your great debt of sin. When you are absolutely bankrupt, then may you believe that Jesus Christ is your Savior! When you are absolutely helpless and hopeless, only believe that Jesus is the Christ and put your trust in Him, and God will remit and discharge all your liabilities, and you shall go away clear before Him!

I may be addressing a soul here that says, “I like that thought. I wish I could catch hold of it, but I feel myself to be such a slave that I cannot grasp it.” Well, the Lord may allow a soul to be in bondage for a time. Indeed, it may be necessary that He should. The Hebrew might be in bondage six years and yet he went free when the seventh year came. There are reasons why the Spirit of God is, to some men, a Spirit of bondage for a long time. Hard hearts must be melted, proud stomachs must be brought down. Some men’s wills are like an iron sinew. Some men’s self-righteousness is hard to slay, even though it is shot through the heart seven times. There are many who would be rebellious against God very soon if they found forgiveness too soon—so He brings down their heart with labor—they fall and there is none to help.

I may be speaking to one here who has been a long time in bondage. I passed through that state, myself, and many a time have I gripped the hand of a poor man or woman in abject distress and despair, almost ready to go into an asylum, and I have said, “I know all about that experience. I know that the Lord does, for a while, suffer the heart to be plowed and torn, and rent, to make it ready for the good seed.” Have you ever seen God’s 10 black horses come out? I mean the Ten Commandments. Have you heard the plowman crack the whip? Have you seen that awful plow that is just behind those horses and how they have dragged that plow up the soul and back again, and up the soul and back again, till the field of the soul has been plowed from end to end? Then, when you thought that the work was all done, the horses have been turned sideways and there has been cross-plowing back and back again, tearing up the whole nature, and breaking every clod to powder! God has His plowers at work upon some men! But, for all that, it is not because He hates them, but because He loves them and means to get out of them a heavy harvest of joy and thankfulness in the years to come!

Once more, the man was set free at the end of the sixth year, paying nothing for his liberation. Though not free-born, nor yet buying his liberty with a great sum, yet he was set free! O Lord, set some soul free tonight! Oh, that every slave here, who is in bondage, may get his liberty tonight, to the praise of the Glory of God's Grace!

And when the Lord sets poor souls at liberty, He always sends them away full-handed. He gives something from the flock, from the threshing floor and from the winepress. Some of us were rich, indeed, the first day we came to Jesus! We know more, now, than we knew then, but we do not possess more than we had then, for we had Christ, then, and He is everything and we cannot get more than that! God gave us Heaven within us, then. Oh, how we laughed for joy that day! We shall never forget it! We were not to be beggars or paupers any more—all the riches of Heaven were bestowed upon us.

There is one thing which may be said here. This act never seems hard to the Lord. He says to the Hebrew, in the 18th verse, "It shall not seem hard unto you, when you send him away free." It never seems hard to Christ when He sets a sinner free. Why, some of you pray as if you thought that Christ was hardhearted! It is you who are hardhearted! You pray as if you thought God *had* to be moved to mercy. It is *you* who need to be moved to *accept* the mercy! God is generous enough. He will set you free and load you daily with His benefits and delight to do it, if you trust His dear Son. In fact, to make worlds is nothing to Him, compared with saving souls. He takes the big hammer of His Omnipotence and brings it down on the anvil of His wisdom and worlds fly like sparks all over the sky when He is at that work! And He thinks nothing of it. But He rests in His love and rejoices over His people with singing when He is at work for their salvation. This is the very joy of His heart—it is never hard for Him to set free those who have been in bondage!

One thing I feel sure of and that is if the Lord sets us free, we shall want to remain His servants forever! We will go straight away to the doorpost and ask Him to use the awl, for, though we are glad to be free, we do not want to be free from Him. No, no! "O Lord, truly I am Your servant. I am Your servant. . . You have loosed my bonds." Once set free, then I wish to be bound to the Lord forever! Come, dear Heart, if you find Christ tonight—if you believe in Him and are at liberty, come and have your ear bored! You do not like Baptism? Come and have your ear bored! You do not like to join the Church and confess Christ? Well, I know that it may be a "bore" to you, but, for all that, come and have your ear bored! Come and say, "I will go no more out forever. Since the Lord has set me free, I will serve Him all my days."

The Lord bless these words to many, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON
LEVITICUS 25:1-7, 17-22, AND DEUTERONOMY 15:1-18.

Leviticus 25:1, 2. *And the LORD spoke unto Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When you come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD.* The Jews had much rest provided for them. If they had had faith enough to obey God's commands, they might have been the most favored of people, but they were not a *spiritual* people and the Lord often had to lament their disobedience as in the words recorded by Isaiah, "O that you had hearkened to My Commandments! Then had your peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea."

3, 4. *Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; but in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD.* Think of a Sabbath a year long, in which nothing was to be done but to worship God and so to rest!

4, 5. *You shall neither sow your field, nor prune your vineyard. That which grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, neither gather the grapes of your vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land.* A restful period in a restful land—all land to have rest and yet to have fruitfulness in that rest! The rest of a garden, not the rest of a *task*. Thus is it oftentimes with God's people—when they rest most, they work best—and while they are resting, they are bearing fruit unto God.

6, 7. *And the sabbath of the land shall be food for you; for you, and for your servant, and for your maid, and for your hired servant, and for your stranger that sojourns with you, and for your cattle, and for the beast that are in your land, shall all the increase thereof be food.* There was to be no private property in the spontaneous produce of that year. It was free to everybody—free even to the cattle—which might go and eat what they would, and where they would.

17-21. *You shall not therefore oppress one another; but you shall fear your God: for I am the LORD your God. Therefore you shall do My statutes, and keep My judgments, and do them; and you shall dwell in the land in safety. And the land shall yield her fruit, and you shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety. And if you shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year, behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase: then I will command My blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years.* Not merely for the one year of rest, but fruit for three years!

22. *And you shall sow the eighth year, and eat yet of old fruit until the ninth year; until her fruits come in you shall eat of the old store.* They were to have enough for the year of rest and for the next year in which the harvest was growing—and still to have something over for the ninth year! They scarcely could need as much as that, but God would give them more than they actually needed, exceeding abundantly above what they asked or even thought. That Sabbatical year had other blessings connected with it. Let us read about them in the Book of Deuteronomy, Chapter Fifteen.

Deuteronomy 15:1, 2. *At the end of every seven years you shall make a release.* And this is the manner of the release—Every creditor that lends anything to his neighbor shall release it—he shall not exact it of his

neighbor, or of his brother because it is called the LORD'S release. What a wonderful title for it, "the LORD'S release"!

3. *Of a foreigner you may exact it again but that which is yours with your brother your hand shall release.* How was a man to pay when he did not sow or reap during the Sabbatical year? The foreigner did not observe the year of rest—consequently he was bound to pay and it was only fair that he should do so. But for the Israelite, who carried out the Divine Law, there was provision made if he were in debt.

4. *Save when there shall be no poor among you.* If there were no poor, then there would be no need for this Law of God.

4-6. *For the LORD shall greatly bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you for an inheritance to possess it: only if you carefully listen unto the voice of the LORD your God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command you this day. For the LORD your God blesses you, as He promised you.* That little clause, "as He promised you," is worth noticing! This is the rule of God—He deals with us "according to promise."

6. *And you shall lend unto many nations, but you shall not borrow; and you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you.* If God's people had done His will, they would have been like their language—it is observed of the Hebrew by some, that it borrows nothing from other tongues, but lends many words to various languages.

7-9. *If there is among you a poor man of one of your brethren within any of your gates in your land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart, nor shut your hand from your poor brother: but you shall open your hand wide unto him, and shall surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he needs. Beware that there is not a thought in your wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and your eyes be evil against your poor brother, and you give him nothing; and he cry unto the LORD against you, and it is sin unto you.* Moses, moved by the Spirit of God, anticipates what would very naturally occur to many—"I shall not lend anywhere near the seventh year; if I do, I shall lose it, for I must release my debtor, then." The hardhearted would be sure to make this their evil excuse for lending nothing. But here the Hebrew is warned against such wicked thoughts, lest, refusing to lend to his poor brother for this cause, the needy one should cry to God, and it should be accounted sin on the part of the merciless refuser.

10, 11. *You shall surely give him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give unto him: because that for this thing the LORD your God shall bless you in all your works, and in all that you put your hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land.* They would have done so—they might have done so—if the rule of God had been kept. But inasmuch as He foresaw that it never would be kept, He also declared, "the poor shall never cease out of the land."

11. *Therefore I command you, saying, You shall open your hand wide unto your brother, to your poor, and to your needy, in your land.* See how God calls them, not, "the poor," but, "your poor" and, "your needy." The Church of God should feel a peculiar property in the poor and needy, as if

they were handed over, in the love of Christ, to His people, that they might care for them.

12. *And if your brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, is sold to you, and serves you six years; then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. He might be under an apprenticeship of servitude for six years, but the seventh year was to be a year of rest to him, as it was a year of release to debtors, and of rest to the land.*

13. *And when you send him out free from you, you shall not let him go away empty. To begin life, again, with nothing at all in his pocket.*

14. *You shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, and out of your threshing floor, and out of your winepress: of that wherewith the LORD your God has blessed you, you shall give unto him. Who would think of finding such a law as that on the statute book? Where is there such a law under any governor but God? The Theocracy would have made a grand government for Israel if Israel had but been able to walk before God in faith and obedience!*

15. *And you shall remember that you were a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you: therefore I command you this thing today. The remembrance of their own deliverance out of Egyptian bondage was to make them merciful and kind to their own bondservants.*

16-18. *And it shall be, if he says unto you, I will not go away from you; because he loves you and your house, because he prospers with you; then you shall take an awl, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be your servant forever. And also unto your maidservant you shall do likewise. It shall not seem hard unto you, when you send him away free from you; for he has been worth a double hired servant to you, in serving you six years. He has had no pay. He has been always at his work. He has been worth two ordinary hired laborers. Let him go, therefore, and let him not go away empty-handed.*

18. *And the LORD your God shall bless you in all that you do.*

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THE PROPHET LIKE UNTO MOSES

NO. 1487

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 3, 1879,
 BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The Lord your God will raise up unto you a Prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren, like unto me; unto Him you shall hearken; according to all that you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying,

Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.

And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto you, and will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him. And it shall

come to pass, that whoever will not hearken unto My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him.”

Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

MAN, the creature, may well desire communion with his Creator. When we are right-minded we cannot bear to be like fatherless children, born into the world by a parent of whom we know nothing whatever. We long to hear our father's voice. Of old time, before sin had entered into the world, the Lord God was on the most intimate terms with His creature, man. He communed with Adam in the garden. In the cool of the day He made the evening to be seven-fold refreshing by the shadow of His own Presence. There was no cloud between unfallen man and the Ever-Blessed One—they could commune together, for no sin had set up a middle wall of partition.

Alas, man, being in honor, continued not, but broke the Law of his God and not only forfeited his own inheritance, but entailed upon his descendants a character with which the holy God can hold no converse. By nature we love that which is evil and within us there is an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God—consequently, communion between God and man has had to be upon quite another footing from that which commenced and ended in the glades of Eden. It was condescension at the first, which made the Lord speak with man, the creature. It is mercy, unutterable mercy, now, if God deigns to speak with man the sinner!

Through His Divine Grace, the Lord did not leave our fathers altogether without a word from Himself even after the Fall, for between the days of Adam and Moses there were occasional voices heard as of God speaking with man. “Enoch walked with God,” which implies that God walked with him and had communion with him. And we may rest assured it was no silent walk which Enoch had with the Most High. The Lord also spoke to Noah, once and again, and made a Covenant with him. And then He, at still greater length and with greater frequency, spoke with Abraham, whom He graciously called His friend.

Voices also came to Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. And celestial beings flitted to and fro between earth and Heaven. Then there was a long pause and a dreary silence. No Prophet spoke in Jehovah's name; no voice of

God in priestly oracle was heard, but all was silent while Israel dwelt in Egypt and sojourned in the land of Ham. So completely hushed was the spiritual voice among men that it seemed as if God had utterly forsaken His people and left the world without a witness to His name.

But there was a prophecy of His return and the Lord had great designs which only waited till the full time was come. He purposed to try man in a very special manner, to see whether he could bear the Presence of the Lord or not. He resolved to take a family, multiply it into a nation and set it apart for Himself. And to that nation He would make a revelation of Himself of the most extraordinary character. So He took the people who had slaved among the brick kilns of Egypt and made them His elect—the nation of His choice—ordained to be a nation of priests, a people near unto Him if they had but Grace to bear the honor.

Though they had lain among the pots, with a high hand and an outstretched arm He delivered them and with gracious love He favored them so that they became for beauty and excellence as the wings of a dove that are covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold. He divided the Red Sea and made them a way of escape and afterwards set that sea as a barrier between them and their former masters. He took them into the wilderness and there fed them with manna which dropped from Heaven and with water out of the rock did He sustain them. After a while He began to speak to them as He had never spoken to any nation before.

He spoke with them from the top of Sinai, so that they heard His Voice out of the midst of the fire and in astonishment they cried, “We have seen this day that God does talk with man and he lives.” But the experiment failed. Man was not in a condition to hear the direct Voice of God. On the very first day the people were in such terror and alarm that they cried out, “This great fire will consume us! If we hear the Voice of the Lord our God any more we shall die.” As they stood still at a distance to hear the words of God’s perfect Law they were filled with great fear. So terrible was the sight that even Moses said, “I exceedingly fear and quake.”

The people could not endure that which was commanded and entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more. They felt the need of someone to interpose—a daysman, an interpreter—someone was needed to come between them and God. Even those among them that were the most spiritual and understood and loved God better than the rest confessed that they could not endure the thunder of His dreadful Voice. And so their elders and the heads of their tribes came to Moses and said, “Go you near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say: and speak you unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto you; and we will hear it, and do it.”

The Lord knew that man would always be unable to hear his Maker’s voice and He, therefore, determined not only to speak by Moses, but to speak by His servants, the Prophets, raising up here, one, and there, another. And then He determined, as the consummation of His condescending mercy, that at the last He would put all the words He had to say to man into one heart and that word should be spoken by one mouth to men, furnishing a full, complete and unchangeable revelation of Himself to the human race! This He resolved to give by One of whom Moses had learned something when the Lord said to Him in the words of our text, “I

will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto you, and will put My words in His month; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him.”

We know assuredly that our Lord Jesus Christ is that Prophets like unto Moses by whom, in these last days, He has spoken unto us! See Peter’s testimony in the third chapter of the Acts of the Apostles and Stephen’s in the seventh chapter of the same book. “This Man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who has built the house has more honor than the house,” yet did He bear a gracious likeness to Moses and therein His Apostles found a sure argument of His being, indeed, the Messiah, sent of God.

The subject of this morning’s discourse is the Lord’s speaking to us by Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man—and our earnest aim is that all of us may reverently hear the Voice of God by this greatest of all Prophets. Brothers and Sisters, this is the Word of God unto you this morning, that very Word which He spoke on the holy Mount, when the Lord was transfigured and there appeared with Him Moses and Elijah speaking to Him. And out of the excellent Glory there came the words, “This is My beloved Son, hear you Him.” This is my message at this hour—“Hear you Him.”

He says to you all this day, “Incline your ear and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live. Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” “See that you refuse not Him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaks from Heaven.” Our meditation will run in this line—first, we will think for a moment upon *the necessity* for a Mediator. Secondly, upon *the Person* of the Prophet-Mediator whom God has chosen. And, thirdly, upon *the authority* with which this Mediator is invested, by which authority He calls upon us this day to listen to God’s Voice which is heard in Him.

I. We begin by considering how urgently there existed THE NECESSITY for a Mediator. I need but very short time to set this forth. There was a necessity for a Mediator in the case of the Israelites, first, *because of the unutterable Glory of God* and their own inability to endure that Glory, either with their eyes, their ears, or their minds. We cannot suppose that the revelation of God upon Sinai was the display of *all* His greatness. No, we know that it could not be such, for it would have been impossible for man to have lived at all in the Presence of the Infinite Glory.

Habakkuk, speaking of this manifestation, says, “God came from Teman and the Holy One from mount Paran. His Glory covered the heavens and the earth was full of His praise. And His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His hands.” But he adds, “There was the hiding of His power.” Despite its exceeding Glory, the manifestation upon the mount of God at Horeb was a subdued manifestation and yet, though it was thus toned down to human weakness, it could not be borne!

The unveiling of Jehovah’s face, no mortal eye could bear! The voice with which God spoke at Sinai is by Moses compared to the voice of a trumpet waxing exceedingly loud and long—and also to the roll of thunder—and we all know the awe-inspiring sound of thunder when it is heard

near at hand, its volleys rolling overhead. How the crash of peal on peal makes the bravest heart, if not to quail, yet still to bow in reverent awe before God! Yet this is not the full Voice of God—it is but His *whisper*. Jehovah has hushed His Voice in the thunder, for were that voice heard in its fullness, it would shake not only earth, but also Heaven.

If He were for once to unveil His face, the lightning's flame would pale to darkness in comparison. The Voice of the Lord God is inconceivably majestic and it is not possible that we, poor creatures, worms of the dust, insects of a day, should ever be able to hear it and live! We could not bear the full revelation of God apart from mediatorial interposition. Perhaps when He has made us to be pure spirits, or when our bodies shall have been “raised in power”—made like unto the body of our Lord Jesus—we may *then* be able to behold the glorious Jehovah, but as yet we must accept the kindly warning of the Lord in answer to the request of Moses, “you cannot see My face, for there shall no man see Me and live.”

The strings of life are too weak for the strain of the unveiled Presence. It is not possible for such a airy, spider-like thread as our existence to survive the breath of Deity if He should actually and in very deed draw near to us. It appeared clearly at Sinai that even when the Lord did accommodate Himself, as much as was consistent with His honor, to the infirmity of human nature, man was so alarmed and afraid at His Presence that he could not bear it—and it was absolutely necessary that instead of speaking with His own Voice, even though He whispered what He had to say, He should speak to another apart and afterwards that other should come down from the mount and repeat the Lord's words to the people.

This sufficient reason is supported by another most weighty fact, namely, that *God cannot commune with men because of their sin*. God was pleased to regard His people Israel at the foot of Sinai as pure. “Moses went down from the mount unto the people and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.” They had abstained, for awhile, from defiling actions and as they stood outside the bounds they were ceremonially clean—but it was only a *ceremonial* purity. Before long they were really unclean before the Lord and in heart defiled and polluted. The Lord said of them, “O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!”

He knew that their heart was not right even when they spoke obediently. Not many days after the people had trembled at Sinai they made a golden calf and set it up and bowed before it, provoking the Lord to jealousy so that He sent plagues among them. It is quite clear that after such a rebellion, after a deliberate breach of His Covenant and daring violation of His commands, it would have been quite impossible for God to speak to them, or for them to listen to the Voice of God in a direct manner. They would have fled before Him because of His holiness which shamed their unholiness! And because of their sin, which provoked His indignation. Because of their wandering, instability and treachery of their hearts, the Lord could not have endured them in His Presence.

The holy angels forever adore with that threefold cry, “Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth,” and He could not permit men of unclean lips to profane His Throne with their unholy utterances. Oh no, my Brothers and

Sisters, with such a sense of sin as some of us have and as all of us ought to have, we should have to cover our faces and cower down in terror if Jehovah, Himself, were to appear! He cannot look upon iniquity, neither can evil dwell with Him, for He is a consuming fire. While we are compassed with infirmity we cannot behold Him, for our eyes are dimmed with the smoke of our iniquities. If we would see even the skirts of His garments, we must first be pure in heart and He must put us in the cleft of the rock and cover us with His hands.

If we were to behold His stern justice, His awful holiness and His boundless power apart from our ever-blessed Mediator, we should dissolve at the sight and utterly melt away, for we have sinned. This double reason of the weakness of our nature and the sinfulness of our character is a forcible one, for I close this part of the discourse by observing that the argument was so forcible that *the Lord Himself allowed it*. He said, "They have well spoken, that which they have spoken." It was no morbid apprehension which made them afraid. It was no foolish dread which made them start, for Wisdom, in the person of Moses, said, "I do exceedingly fear and quake."

The calmest and meekest of men had real cause for fear. God's face is not to be seen. An occasional glimpse may come to spirits raised above their own natural level, so that they can, for a while, behold the King, the Lord of Hosts—but even to them it is a terrible strain upon all their powers—the wine is too strong for the bottles. What said John, when he saw, not so much *absolute* Deity, but the Divine side of the Mediator? "When I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead." Daniel, the man greatly beloved, confesses that there remained no strength in him and his comeliness was turned into corruption when he heard the Voice of God!

And Job said, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You; therefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes." No, God knows it is not silly fright nor unbelieving fear—it is a most seemly awe and a most natural dread which takes hold of finite and fallible creatures in the Presence of the Infinite and Perfect One! These frail tabernacles, like the tents of Cushan, are in affliction when the Lord marches by in the greatness of His power. We need a Mediator. The Lord knows right well that our sinfulness provokes Him and that there is, in us—in the best here present—that which would make Him to break out against us to destroy us if we were to come to Him without a covering and propitiation. We must approach the Lord through a Mediator—it is absolutely necessary.

God Himself witnesses it is and, therefore, in His mercy He ordains a Mediator, that by Him we may be able to approach His Throne of Grace. May the Holy Spirit make this Truth of God very plain to the consciousness of all of us and cause us to sing with the poet—

***"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred
Three are terrors to my mind.
But if Immanuel's face appears,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His Grace removes my sins."***

II. This brings us to consider THE PERSON of the appointed Mediator and in my text we obtain a liberal measure of information upon this point. Read these blessed words, "The Lord your God will raise up unto you a Prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren." Dwell with sweetness upon this fact that our Lord Jesus was raised up from the midst of us, from among our brethren! In Him is fulfilled that glorious prophecy, "I have exalted One chosen out of the people." He is one of ourselves, a Brother born for adversity. He was born at Bethlehem, not in fiction, but in fact—He lay in the manger where the horned oxen fed. He was wrapped in swaddling cloths and dependent on a woman's loving care as any other baby might be. He was like ourselves in His growth from Infancy to Manhood, increasing in stature as we do from our childhood to our riper age. Though the holy Child Jesus, He was yet a Child and, therefore, He was subject to His parents.

And when He came forth as a Man, His was no phantom manhood, but true flesh and blood! He was tempted and He was betrayed. He hungered and He thirsted. He was weary and He was sorely amazed. He took our sicknesses and He carried our sorrows. He was made in all points like unto His brethren. He did not set Himself apart as though He were of an exclusive caste or of a superior rank, but He dwelt among us—the Brother of the race, eating with publicans and sinners—always mingling with the common people. He was not One who boasted His descent, or gloried in the so-called blue blood, or placed Himself among the *Porphyro-geniti* who must not see the light except in marble halls. He was born in a common house of entertainment where all might come to Him and He died with His arms extended as a pledge that He continued to receive all who came to Him!

He never spoke of men as the common multitude, the vulgar herd, but He made Himself at home among them. He was dressed like a peasant, in the ordinary smock of the country—a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout. And He mixed with the multitude, went to their marriage feasts, attended their funerals and was so much among them, a Man among men, that slander called Him a glutton and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. In all respects our Lord was raised up from the midst of us, One of our own kith and kin. "For this cause He is not ashamed to call us brethren."

He was our Brother in living, our Brother in death and our Brother in resurrection, for after His Resurrection He said, "Go, tell My Brethren." And He also said, "My Father, and your Father; My God, and your God." Though now exalted in the highest heavens, He pleads for us and acts as a High Priest who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. God has graciously raised up such a Mediator and now He speaks to us through Him. O sons of men, will you not listen when such an One as Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Man, is ordained to speak of the eternal God? You might be unable to hear if He should speak again in thunder, but now He speaks by those dear lips of love! Now He speaks by that gracious tongue which has worked such miracles of Grace by its words! Now He speaks out of that great heart of His which never beats except with love to the sons of men—will you not hear Him? Surely we ought to give the most earnest heed and obey His every word.

Moses was truly one of the people, for he loved them intensely and all his sympathies were with them. They provoked him terribly, but he still loved them. We can never admire that man of God too much when we think of his disinterested love to that guilty nation. See him on the mountain as Israel's advocate! The Lord said, "Let Me alone that I may destroy them, and I will make of you a great nation." That proposal opened up before Moses' eyes a glittering destiny! It was within his grasp that he should become the founder of a race in whom the promises made to Abraham should be fulfilled! Would not the most of men have greedily snatched at it?

But Moses will not have it! He loves Israel too well to see the people die if he can save them. He has not an atom of selfish ambition about him. And so with cries and tears he exclaims, "Why should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Your fierce wrath and repent of this evil against Your people." He prevailed with God by his pleading, for he identified himself with Israel. Moses did, as it were, gather up all their grief and sorrow into *himself*, even as did our Lord. True Israelite was he, for he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter! He cast his lot with the people of God.

This is just what our blessed Lord has done. He will not have honor apart from His people, nor even life unless they also live. He saved others, Himself He could not save. He would not be in Heaven and leave His saints behind! He loved the people and so proved Himself to be One chosen out of their midst, a Brother among brethren. Mark well that while thus our Lord is our Brother, the great God has, in His Person, sent us One who is lifted up above us all in the knowledge of His mind. Thus says the Lord (v. 18), "I will put My words in His mouth." Our Lord Jesus Christ comes to us inspired by God. Not alone He comes, nor of His own mind, but He says, "The Father is with Me: I do always the things which please Him: the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works." Both in word and work He acted for His Father and under His Father's inspiration.

Brothers and Sisters, I beseech you not to reject the message which Jesus brings, seeing it is not His own, but the sure message of God! Trifle not with a single word which Jesus speaks, for it is the Word of the Eternal One! Despise not one single deed which He did, or precept which He commanded, or blessing which He brought, for upon all these there is the stamp of Deity! God chose One who is our Brother that He might come near to us and He put His own royal imprimatur upon Him that we might not have an Ambassador of second rank, but One who counts it not robbery to be equal with God, who, nevertheless, for our sake has taken upon Himself the form of a Servant that He might speak home to our hearts. For all these reasons, I beseech you despise not Him that speaks, seeing He speaks from Heaven!

The main point, however, upon which I want to dwell is that Jesus is like Moses. There had been no better mediator found than Moses up to Moses' day. The Lord God, therefore, determined to work upon that model with the great Prophet of His race and He has done so in sending forth the Lord Jesus. It would be a very interesting task for the young people to

work out all the points in which Moses is a personal type of the Lord Jesus. The points of resemblance are very many, for there is hardly a single incident in the life of the great Lawgiver which is not symbolic of the promised Savior.

You may begin from the beginning at the waters of the Nile and go to the close upon the brow of Pisgah and you will see Christ in Moses as a man sees his face in a glass. I can only mention in what respects, as a Mediator, Jesus is like Moses, and surely one is found in the fact that Moses, beyond all that went before him, was *peculiarly the depository of the mind of God*. Once and again we find him closeted with God for 40 days at a time. He went right away from men to the lone mountaintop and there he was, 40 days and 40 nights, and did neither eat nor drink, but lived in high communion with his God! In those times of seclusion he received the pattern of the tabernacle, the Laws of the priesthood, of the sacrifices of the holy days and of the civil estate of Israel—and perhaps the early records which compose the Book of Genesis. To whom else had God ever spoken for that length of time as a man speaks with his friend?

Moses was the peculiar favorite of God. From the first day of his call, when he was keeping his father's flock at the back of the desert, right to the day when God kissed away his soul on the top of Nebo, he was a man greatly beloved to whom God manifested Himself as to no other. Hear the Lord's own words to Aaron and Miriam. "And He said, Hear now My words: If there is a Prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known unto Him in a vision, and will speak unto Him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all My house. With Him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches: and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold. Why, then, were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?"

In this our Lord Jesus is like Moses, only He far surpasses him, for the communion between Christ and the Father was very much more intimate, seeing that Jesus is, Himself, essential Deity, and, "in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Cold mountains and the midnight air continually witnessed to His communion with the Father. Nor these, alone, for He abode with the Father! His language was always spoken out as God was speaking *within* Him. He lived *in* God and *with* God. "I know," He said, "that You hear Me always." Instead of having to point out when Christ was in communion with the Father, we have rather, with astonishment, to point out the *one* moment when He was not in communion with the Father, even that dread hour when He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Only that one time did the Father leave Him and even then it was inexplicable and He asked the reason for it—though He knew that He was suffering as the Substitute for man—yet did His desertion by God come upon Him as a novelty which utterly overwhelmed Him so that He asked in agony why He was forsaken. Moses, to take another point, is the first of the Prophets *with whom God kept up continuous Revelation*. To other men He spoke in dreams and visions, but to Moses by plain and perpetual testimony. His Spirit rested on him and he took of it to give thereof to Joshua and to the 70 elders, even as Jesus gave of His Spirit to the Apostles.

Sometimes God spoke to Noah, or to Abraham and others—but it was only upon certain occasions and, even then, as in the case of Abraham and Jacob, they must fall asleep to see and hear Him best. But with Moses, the Lord abode perpetually! Whenever he willed, he consulted the Most High and at once God spoke with him and directed his way. So was it with Christ Jesus. He needed not to behold a vision—the spirit of prophecy did not occasionally come upon Him and bear Him out of Himself—for the Spirit was given Him without measure and He perpetually knew the very mind and heart of God. He was *always* a Prophet, not *sometimes* a prophet, like he of old, of whom we read, “The Spirit of God came upon him in the camp of Dan.” Or like others of whom it is written, “The Word of the Lord came to them.”

At all times the Spirit rested upon Jesus—He spoke in the abiding power of the Holy Spirit more so than did Moses. Moses is described as a Prophet *mighty in word and deed* and it is amazing that there never was another Prophet mighty in word and deed till Jesus came. Moses not only spoke with matchless power, but worked miracles. You shall find no other Prophet who did both. Other Prophets who spoke well worked no miracles, or only here and there—while those who worked miracles, such as Elijah and Elisha, have left us but few words that they spoke—indeed, their prophecies were but lightning flashes and not as the bright shining of the sun.

When you come to our Lord Jesus you find lips and heart working together with equal perfectness of witness. You cannot tell in which He is the more marvelous—in His speech or in His acts. “Never man spoke like this Man,” but certainly never man worked such marvels of mercy as Jesus did! He far exceeds Moses and all the Prophets put together in the variety and the multitude and the wonderful character of the miracles which He did. If men bow before Prophets who can cast down their rods and they become serpents—if they yield homage to Prophets who call fire from Heaven—how much more should they accept Him whose Words are matchless music and whose miracles of love were felt even beyond the boundaries of this visible world?

The angels of God flew from Heaven to minister to Him. The devils of the Pit fled before His voice and the caverns of death heard His call and yielded up their prey! Who would not accept this Prophet like Moses, to whom the Holy Spirit bore witness by mighty signs and wonders? Moses, again, was *the founder of a great system of religious law* and this was not the case with any other but the Lord Jesus. He founded the whole system of the Aaronic Priesthood and the Law that went with it. Moses was a Lawgiver—he gave the Ten Commandments in the name of God—and all the other statutes of the Jewish polity were ordained through him. Now, till you come to Christ you find no such Lawgiver—but Jesus institutes the New Covenant as Moses introduced the old!

The Sermon on the Mount was an utterance from a happier Sinai and, whereas Moses gives this and that command, Jesus gives the same in sweeter form and in a more Divine fashion and embodies it in His own sacred Person. He is the great Legislator of our dispensation He is the King in the midst of Jeshurun giving forth His commands which run very swiftly and they that fear the Lord are obedient to them. Time will fail us,

or we would mention to you that *Moses was faithful before God* as a servant over all his house and so was Jesus as a Son over His own house! Jesus was never unfaithful to His charge in any respect, but in all things ruled and served to perfection as the Anointed of the Father. He is the faithful and true Witness, the Prince of the kings of the earth.

Moses, too, was *zealous for God* and for His honor. Remember how the zeal of God's house did eat him up? When he saw grievous sin among the people, he said, "Who is on the Lord's side?" and there came to him the tribe of Levi and he said, "Go in and out, and slay you, everyone, his men that were joined to Baalpeor." Herein he was the stern type of Jesus who took the scourge of small cords and drove out the buyers and sellers and said, "Take these things away: it is written, My Father's house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves," for the zeal of God's house had eaten Him up.

Moses, by Divine Grace, was *very meek* and, perhaps, this is the chief parallel between him and Jesus. I have said, "by Divine Grace," for I suppose by *nature* he was strongly passionate. There are many indications that Moses was not meek, but very far from it until the Spirit of God rested upon him. He slew the Egyptian hastily and in later years he went out from the presence of Pharaoh "in great anger." Once and again you find him very angry—he took the tablets of stone and dashed them in pieces in his indignation, for "Moses' anger waxed hot," and that unhappy action which occasioned his being shut out of Canaan was caused by his "being provoked in spirit so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips" and said, "Hear now, you rebels! Must I fetch you water out of this rock?" Divine Grace had so cooled and calmed him that in general he was the gentlest of men and when his brother and sister thrust themselves into his place and questioned his authority, it is written, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."

In his own defense he has never anything to say—it is only for the people and for God that his anger waxed hot. Even about his last act of hastiness he says, "God was angry with me for your sake," not for his own sake. He was so meek and gentle that for 40 years he bore with the most rebellious and provoking nation that ever existed! But what shall I say of my Master? Let Him speak for Himself. "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest: take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls." Our children call Him, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild." The Man Jesus is very meek above all men that are upon the face of the earth. He has His indignation—

***"Like glowing often is His wrath,
As flame by furious blast up blown,"***

for He can be angry and the wrath of the Lamb is the most awful wrath beneath the sun! But still, to us, in this Gospel day, He is all love and tenderness. And when He bids us come to Him, can we refuse to hear?

So meek is the Mediator that He is Love itself, Incarnate Love! He is so loving that when He died, His only crime was that He was "found guilty of excess of love." Can we be so cruel as to reject Him? O Brothers and Sisters, do not refuse to listen to the voice of this Tender One by whom God speaks to you! Our Lord was like Moses in meekness and then, to sum it

all up —Moses was the *Mediator for God with the people* and so is our blessed Lord. Moses came in God's name and set Israel free from Pharaoh's bondage. Jesus came to set us free from a worse bondage and He has achieved our freedom. Moses led the people through the Red Sea and Jesus has led us where all the hosts of Hell were overthrown and sin was drowned in His most precious blood!

Moses led the tribes through the wilderness and Jesus leads us through the weary ways of this life to the rest which remains for the people of God. Moses spoke to the people for God and Jesus has done the same. Moses spoke to God for the people and Jesus always lives to make intercession for us. Moses proposed himself as a sacrifice when he said, "If not, blot my name out of the Book of Life." But Jesus *was* an actual Sacrifice and was taken away from the land of the living for our sakes, being made a curse for us! Moses, in a certain sense, died for the people, for he could not enter into the land, but had to close his eyes on Nebo.

Those are touching words, "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes"—words which, in a more Divine sense, may be fitly applied to Jesus—for God was angry with Him for our sakes. Right through to the very end our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, is a Prophet like Moses, raised up from the midst of His brethren. O my Hearers, listen to Him! Turn not your ear away from this Prophet of Prophets, but hear and live!

III. I close with that point and if my words are very few let them be weighty. Let us think of THE AUTHORITY of our great Mediator and let this be the practical lesson—Hear you Him. Brothers and Sisters, if our hearts were right, the moment it was announced that God would speak to us through Jesus Christ, there would be a rush to hear Him! If sin had not maddened men, they would listen eagerly to every Word of God through such a Mediator as Jesus! They would write each golden sentence on their tablets! They would hoard His Words in their memories! They would wear them between their eyes! They would yield their hearts to them!

Alas, it is not so, and the saddest thing of all is that some talk of Jesus for gain and others hear of Him as if His story were a mere tale or an old Jewish ballad of 1,800 years ago. Yet, remember, God still speaks by Jesus and every Word of His that is left on record is as solemnly alive, today, as when it first leaped from His blessed lips! I beseech you remember Christ comes not as an amateur, but He has authority with Him—this Ambassador to men wears the authority of the King of kings! If you despise Him, you despise Him that sent Him—if you turn away from Him that speaks from Heaven, you turn away from the eternal God and you do despite to His love! Oh, don't do it!

Note how my text puts it. It says here, "Whoever shall not hearken unto My words which He shall speak in My name, *I will require it of him.*" My heart trembles while I repeat to you the words, "I will require it of him." Today God graciously requires it of some of you and asks why you have not listened to Christ's voice. Why is this? You have not accepted His salvation. Why is this? You know all about Jesus and you say it is true, but you have never believed in Him! Why is this? God requires it of you! Many years has He waited patiently and He has sent His servant again and

again to invite you. The men of Nineveh sought mercy in *their* day and yet *you* have not repented! God requires it of you!

Why is this? Give your Maker a reason for your rejection of His mercy if you can—fashion some sort of excuse, O you rebellious ones! Do you despise your God? Do you dare His wrath? Do you defy His anger? Are you so mad as this? The day will come when He will require it of you in a much more violent sense than He does today! The day comes when you shall have passed beyond the region of mercy and He will say, “I called you and you refused, why is this? I did not speak to you in thunder. I spoke to you with the gentle voice of the Only Begotten who bled and died for men—why did you not listen to Him? Every Sabbath My servant tried to repeat the language of His Master to you—why did you refuse it? You are cast into Hell—why did you not accept the pardon which would have delivered you from it?”

You were too busy! Too busy to remember your God? What could you have been busy about that was worth a thought as compared with Him? You were too fond of pleasure. And do you dare insult your God by saying that trifling amusements which are not worth the mentioning could stand in comparison with His love and His good pleasure? Oh, how you deserve His wrath! I pray you consider what this means, “I will require it of him.” You who still harden your hearts and refuse my Master, go away with this ringing in your ears, “I will require it of him! I will require it of him. When he lies dying alone in that sick chamber I will require it of Him! When he has taken the last plunge and left this world and finds himself in eternity, I will require it of him! And when the thunder wakes the dead and the great Prophet like Moses shall sit on the Great White Throne to judge the quick and the dead, I will require it of Him! I will require it of Him.”

My Master will require of me how I have preached to you and I sincerely wish it were in my power to put these things in better form and plead with you more earnestly. But, after all, what can *I* do? If you have no care for your own souls, how can I help it? If you will rush upon eternal woe. If you will despise the altogether Lovely One through whom God speaks to you. If you will live day after day carelessly and wantonly, throwing away your souls, oh, then, my eyes shall weep in secret places for you, but what more can I do but leave you to God? At the last I shall be compelled to say, “Amen,” to the verdict which condemns you forever!

God grant that such a reluctant task may not fall to my lot in reference to any of you, but may you now hear and obey the Lord Jesus and find eternal salvation at once, for His dear name’s sake. Amen.

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RAILINGS

NO. 2999

A SERMON
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*“When you build a new house, then you shall make a railing for your roof that you bring not guilt of bloodshed on your household, if any man fall from it.”
Deuteronomy 22:8.*

[This sermon was originally entitled BATTLEMENTS.]

THIS interesting law which, in its letter, was binding on the Jewish people, in its spirit furnishes an admirable rule for us upon whom the ends of the world are come.

It is not necessary to inform this audience that the roofs of Eastern dwellings were flat and that the inhabitants were accustomed to spend much of their time upon the tops of their houses, not only conversing there during the day, but sleeping there at night. If the roofs were without any fencing or protection around their edge, it might often happen that little children might fall over—and not infrequently grown-ups might inadvertently take a false step and suffer serious injury, if not death itself. Where there were no railings or low walls around the roof, accidents frequently occurred. But God commanded His people, while they were yet in the wilderness, that when they came into the promised land and proceeded to build houses, they should take care in every case to build a sufficient railing that life might not be lost through preventable casualty.

This careful command clearly shows us that God holds life to be very valuable and that as He would not permit us to kill by malice, so He would not allow us to kill by negligence, but would have us most tender of human lives. Such rules as the one before us are precedents for sanitary laws and give the weight of Divine sanction to every wise sanitary arrangement. No man has a right to be filthy in his person, or his house, or his trade, for even if he, himself, may flourish amid unhealthy accumulations of dirt, he has no right, by his unclean habits, to foster a deadly typhus, or afford a nest for cholera. Those whose houses are foul, whose rooms are unventilated, whose persons are disgusting, cannot be said to love their neighbor—and those who create nuisances in our crowded cities are guilty of wholesale murder. No man has a right to do anything which must inevitably lead to the death or to the injury of those by whom he is surrounded—he is bound to do all in his power to prevent any harm coming to his fellow men. That seems to be the moral teaching of this ordinance of making railings around the

housetops—teaching, mark you, that which I would like all housewives, workingmen, manufacturers and vestrymen to take practical note of.

But, if ordinary life is precious, much more is the life of the soul and, therefore, it is our Christian duty never to do that which imperils either our own or other men's souls. To us there is an imperative call from the great Master that we care for the eternal interests of others and that we, as far as we can, prevent their exposure to temptations which might lead to their fatal falling into sin.

We shall now lead you to a few meditations which have, in our mind, gathered around the text.

I. First, GOD HAS RAILINGS ON HIS OWN HOUSE. Let this serve as a great Truth with which to begin our contemplations. God takes care that all His children are safe. There are high places in His House and He does not deny His children the enjoyment of these high places, but He makes sure that they shall not be in danger there. He sets railings around them lest they should suffer harm when in a state of exaltation.

God, in His House, has given us *many high and sublime doctrines*. Timid minds are afraid of these, but the highest doctrine in Scripture is safe enough because God has railed it—and as no man in the East need be afraid to walk on the roof of his house when the railing is there, so no man need hesitate to believe the Doctrine of Election, the Doctrine of Eternal and Immutable Love, or any of the Divine teachings which circle around the Covenant of Grace—if he will at the same time see that God has guarded those Truths so that none may fall from them to their own destruction.

Take, for instance, the *Doctrine of Election*. What a high and glorious Truth of God this is, that God has, from the beginning, chosen His people unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the Truth! Yet that Doctrine has turned many simpletons dizzy through looking at it apart from kindred teachings. Some, I do not doubt, have willfully leaped over the railing which God has set about this Doctrine and have turned it into Antinomianism, degrading it into an excuse for evil living and reaping just damnation for their willful perversion! But God has been pleased to set around that Doctrine other Truths of God which shield it from misuse. It is true He has a chosen people, but “by their fruits you shall know them.” Without holiness no man shall see the Lord! Though He has chosen His people, yet He has chosen them unto holiness—He has ordained them to be zealous for good works. His intention is not that they should be saved *in* their sins, but saved *from* their sins! Not that they should be carried to Heaven as they are, but that they should be cleansed and purged from all iniquities and so made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

Then there is the sublime brush of the *Final Perseverance of the Saints*. What a noble height is that! A housetop Doctrine, indeed! What a Pisgah view is to be had from the summit of it—“The Lord will keep the feet of His saints.” “The righteous also shall hold on his way and he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.” It will be a great loss to us if we are unable to enjoy the comfort of this Truth. There is no reason

for fearing presumption through a firm conviction of the true Believer's safety. Mark well the railings which God has built around the edge of this Truth! He has declared that if these shall fall away, it is impossible "to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame." If those who are true saints should altogether lose the life of God that is within their souls, there would remain no other salvation! If the first salvation could have spent itself unavailingly, there would be no alternative but "a certain looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." When we read warnings such as, "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall," and others of that kind, we see how God has made a railing around this tower-like Truth of God so that saints may ascend to its very summit and look abroad upon the land that flows with milk and honey—and yet their brains need not whirl, nor shall they fall into presumption and perish!

That wonderful *Doctrine of Justification by Faith* which we all hold to be a vital Truth of God, not only of Protestantism but of Christianity, itself, is quite as dangerous by itself as the Doctrine of Election, or the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints—in fact, if a man means to sin, he can break down every bulwark and turn any doctrine into an apology for transgression! Even the doctrine that God is merciful, simple as that is, may be made into an excuse for sin. To return to the doctrine that we are justified by faith and not by the works of the Law, Luther put it very grandly, very boldly and, for him, very properly. But there are some who use his phrase, not in Luther's way, and without Luther's reasons for unguarded speaking—and such persons have sometimes done serious damage to men's souls by not mentioning another Truth which is meant to be the railing to the Doctrine of Faith, namely, the necessity of sanctification. Where faith is genuine, through the Holy Spirit's power, it works a cleansing from sin, a hatred of evil, an anxious desire after holiness and it leads the soul to aspire after the image of God. Faith and holiness are inseparable. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature." Good works are to be insisted on, for they have their necessary uses. James never contradicts Paul—it is because we do not understand him that we fancy he does so. Both the doctrinal Paul and the practical James spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Paul builds the tower and James puts the railing around it—Paul conducts us to the summit of God's House and bids us rejoice in what we see there. And then James points us to the railing that is built up to keep us from leaping over the Truth of God to our own destruction. Thus is each doctrine balanced, bulwarked and guarded, but time would fail us to enter into detail—let it suffice for us to know that the Palace of the Truth of God is railed with wisdom and prudence!

Take another view of the same thought. The Lord has guarded the position of His saints if endowed with wealth. Some of God's servants are, in His Providence, called to very prosperous conditions in life—and prosperity is filled with dangers. It is hard to carry a full cup without a spill. A man may travel on the ground well enough, and yet find it hard

work to walk on a high rope. A man may be an excellent servant who would make a bad master—and one may be a good tradesman in a small way who would make a terrible failure of it as a merchant. Yet be well assured that if God shall call any of you to be prosperous and give you much of this world's goods, and place you in an eminent position, He will see to it that His Grace is given suitable for your station and affliction necessary for your elevation!

The Lord will put railings around you, and it is most probable that these will not commend themselves to your carnal nature. You are going on right joyously, everything is “merry as a marriage bell,” but, all of a sudden you are brought to a dead still. You kick against this hindering disappointment, but it will not move out of your way. You are vexed with it, but there it is. Oh, how anxious you are to go a step farther and then you think you will be supremely happy—but it is just that perfect happiness so nearly within reach that God will not permit you to attain, for then you would receive your portion in this life, forget your God and despise the better land! That bodily infirmity, that lack of favor with the great, that sick child, that suffering wife, that embarrassing partnership—any of these may be the railing which God has built around your success, lest you should be lifted up with pride and your soul should not be upright in you! Does not this remark cast a light upon the mystery of many a painful dispensation? “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word.” That experience may be read another way and you may confess, “Had I not been afflicted, I would have gone far astray. But now I have kept Your Word.”

The same prudence is manifested by our Lord towards those whom He has seen fit to place in *positions of eminent service*. Those who express great concern for prominent ministers, because of their temptations, do well, but they will be even more in the path of duty if they have as much solicitude about *themselves*. I remember one whose pride was visible in his very manner. He was a person unknown, of little service in the church, but as proud of his little badly plowed, weedy half acre as ever a man could be! He informed me very pompously, on more than one occasion, that he trembled lest I should be unduly exalted and puffed up with pride! Now, from his lips, it sounded like comedy and reminded me of Satan reproving sin. God never honors His servants with success without effectually preventing their grasping the honor of their work. If we are tempted to boast, He soon lays us low. He always whips behind the door at home those whom He most honors in public. You may rest assured that if God honors you by enabling you to win many souls, you will have many stripes to bear—and stripes you would not like to tell another of, they will be so sharp and humbling. If the Lord loves you, He will never let you be lifted up in His service. We have to feel that we are but just the pen in the Master's hand so that if holiness is written on men's hearts, the credit will not be ours, but the Holy Spirit must have all the praise—and this our Heavenly Father has effectual means of securing! Do not, therefore, start back from qualifying yourself for the most eminent position, or from occupying it when duty calls. Do not let

Satan deprive God's great cause of your best service through your unholy bashfulness and cowardly retirement. The Lord will give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways. If God sets you on the housetop, He will place a railing around you. If He makes you to stand on the high places, He will make your feet like hind's feet, so that you shall not fall. If God commands you to dash against the enemy single-handed, still, "as your days, so shall your strength be." He will uphold you and on the pinnacle you are as secure as in the valley, if Jehovah set you there!

It is the same with regard to the high places of *spiritual enjoyment*. Paul was caught up to the third heavens and he heard words unlawful for a man to utter. This was a very, very high place for Paul's mind, mighty brain and heart as he had—but then, there was the railing—"Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the Revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me." Paul was not in love with this drawback. He besought the Lord to remove it three times, but still the thorn could not be taken away, for it was necessary as a railing around the eminent Revelations with which God had favored His Apostle! The temptation, if we are at all happy in the Lord, is to grow secure—"My mountain stands firm," we say, "I shall never be moved."

Even much communion with Christ, though in itself sanctifying, may be perverted through the folly of our flesh, into a cause of self-security. We may even dream that we are brought so near to Christ that common temptations are not likely to assail us—and by these very temptations we may fall. Hence it is that as sure as ever we have high seasons of enjoyment, we shall sooner or later endure periods of deep depression. Scarcely ever is there a profound calm on the soul's sea, but a storm is brewing! The sweet day so calm, so bright, shall have its fall and the dew of the succeeding night shall weep over its departure. The high hill must have its following valley and the flood-tide must retreat at ebb. Lest the soul should be beguiled to live upon itself and feed on its frames and feelings—and by neglect of watchfulness fall into presumptuous sins—railings are set around all hallowed joys, for which in eternity we shall bless the name of the Lord.

Too many of the Lord's servants feel as if they were always on the housetop—always afraid, always full of doubts and fears. They are fearful lest they shall, after all, perish, and of a thousand things besides. Satan sets up scarecrows to keep these timid birds from feeding upon the wheat which the great Husbandman grows on purpose for them! They scarcely ever reach the assurance of faith. They are stung by "if's and "buts," like Israel by the fiery serpents, and they can scarcely get beyond torturing fear which is as an adder biting their heel. To such we say, Beloved, you shall find, when your faith is weakest, when you are just about to fall, that there is a glorious railing all around you—a gracious promise, a gentle Word of the Holy Spirit shall be brought home to your soul so that you shall not utterly despair. Have you not felt, sometimes,

that if it had not been for a choice love-word heard in the past, your faith would have given up the ghost? Or if it had not been for that encouraging sermon which came with such power to your soul, your feet had almost gone, your steps had well-near slipped? Now, the Infinite Love of God, dear child of God, values you far too much to allow you to fall into despair—

***“Mid all your fear, and care, and woe,
His Spirit will not let you go.”***

Railed by eternal Grace shall this roof of the house be—and when you are tremblingly pacing it, you shall have no cause for alarm!

II. From the fact of the Lord’s carefulness over His people, we proceed, by an easy step, to the consideration that as imitators of God, we should exercise the same tenderness. In a word, WE OUGHT TO HAVE OUR HOUSES RAILED.

A man who had no railing to his house might himself fall from the roof in an unguarded moment. He might be startled in his sleep and in the dark mistake his way to the stairs, or, while day-dreaming, his steps might slip. Those who profess to be the children of God should, for their own sakes, see that every care is used to guard themselves against the perils of this tempted life. They should see to it that their house is carefully railed. If any ask, “How shall we do it?” we reply—

Every man ought to examine himself carefully, whether he is in the faith, lest professing too much, taking too much for granted, he should fall and perish. At times, we should close our spiritual warehouse and take stock. A tradesman who does not like to do that is generally in a bad way. A man who does not think it wise to sometimes sit down and give half a day, or such time as he can spare, to a solemn stocktaking of his soul, may be afraid that things are not going right with him. Lest we should be, after all, hypocrites, or self-deceivers! Lest, after all, we should not be born-again, but should be children of Nature, neatly dressed, but not the living children of God, we must prove ourselves whether we are in the faith. Let us protect our souls’ interests with frequent self-examinations!

Better still, and safer by far, *go often to the Cross* as you think you went at first. Go every day to the Cross—still with empty hands and with a bleeding heart, go and receive everything from Christ and seek to have your wounds bound up with the healing ointment of His atoning Sacrifice. These are the best railings I can recommend you—self-examination on the one side of the house, and a simple faith in Jesus on the other.

Rail your soul about well with prayer. Go not out into the world to look upon the face of man till you have seen the face of God. Never rush down from your chamber with such unseemly haste that you have not time to buckle on your helmet and gird on your breastplate and your coat of mail.

Be sure and rail yourself about with much watchfulness and, especially, *watch most the temptation peculiar to your position and disposition.* You may not be inclined to be slothful. You may not be

fascinated by the silver of Demas into covetousness and yet you may be beguiled by pleasure. Watch, if you have a hasty temper, lest that should overthrow you. Or if yours is a high and haughty spirit, set a double watch to bring that demon down! If you are inclined to indolence, or, on the other hand, if hot passions and evil desires are most likely to attack you, cry to the Strong for strength! And as he who guards well sets a double guard where the wall is weakest, so do you the same.

There are some respects in which every man should rail his house by denying himself those indulgences which might be lawful to others, but which would prove fatal to himself. The individual who knows his weakness to be an appetite for drink should resolve to totally abstain. Every man, I believe, has a particular sin which is a sin to him, but may not be a sin to another. No man's conscience is to be a judge for another, but let no man violate his conscience. If you cannot perform a certain act in faith, you must not do it at all. I mean if you do not honestly and calmly believe it to be right, even if it is right in itself, it becomes wrong to you. Watch, therefore, watch at all points. Guard yourselves in company, lest you are carried away by the force of numbers. Guard yourselves in solitude, lest selfishness and pride creep in. Watch yourselves in poverty, lest you fall into envy of others. And in wealth, lest you become lofty in mind. Oh, that we may all keep our houses well-railed, lest we fall and grieve the Spirit of God and bring dishonor on Christ's name!

III. As each man ought to rail his house, in a spiritual sense, with regard to himself, **SO OUGHT EACH MAN TO CARRY OUT THE RULE WITH REGARD TO HIS FAMILY.**

Family religion was the strength of Protestantism at first. It was the glory of Puritanism and Non-Conformity. In the days of Cromwell it is said that you might have walked down Cheapside, at a certain hour in the morning, and you would have heard the morning hymns going up from every house and along the street. And at night, if you had glanced inside each home, you would have seen the whole household gathered, the big Bible opened and family devotion offered. There is no fear of this land ever becoming Popish if family prayer is maintained. But if family prayer is swept away, farewell to the strength of the Church! A man should rail his house for his children's sake, for his servants' sake, for his own sake, by maintaining the ordinance of family prayer. I may not dictate to you whether you should sing, or read, or pray—or whether you should do this every morning or evening, or how many times a day. I shall leave this to the free spirit that is in you, but do maintain family prayer and never let the fire on the altar of God burn low in your habitation.

So in the matter of discipline. If the child shall do everything it chooses to do. If it shall do wrong and there is no admonition. If there is no chastisement, if the reins are loosely held, if the father altogether neglects to be a priest and a king in his house—how can he wonder that his children grow up to break his heart? David had never chastised

Absalom, nor Adonijah—and remember what they became. And Eli's sons who never had more than a soft word or two from their father—how were his ears made to tingle with the news of God's judgments upon them! Rail your houses by godly discipline. See that obedience is maintained and that sin is not tolerated—and so shall your house be holiness unto the Lord—and peace shall dwell therein!

We ought to strictly rail our houses *as to many things which in this day are tolerated*. I am sometimes asked, "May not a Christian subscribe to a lottery? May not a Christian indulge in a game of cards? May not a Christian dance, or attend the opera?" Now, I shall not come down to debate upon the absolute right or wrong of debatable amusements and customs. The fact is that if professors do not stop till they are certainly in the wrong, they will stop nowhere! It is of little use to go on till you are over the edge of the roof and then cry, "STOP!" It would be a poor affair for a house to be without a railing, but to have a net to stop the falling person half-way down—you must stop before you get off the solid standing! There is need to draw the line somewhere and the line had better be drawn too soon than too late. And whereas the habit of gambling is the very curse of this land—ah, during the last Derby week, what blood it shed! How it has brought souls to Hell and men to an unripe grave!—as the habit of speculating seems to run through the land, and was doubtless the true cause of the great panic which shook our nation a few years ago—there is the more need that we should not tolerate anything that looks like it.

For another reason, we should carefully discern between places of public amusement. Some that are perfectly harmless, recreative and instructive—to deny these to our young people would be foolish. But certain amusements stand on the border between the openly profane and the really harmless. We say do not go to these—never darken the doors of such places. Why? Because it may be the edge of the house and though you may not break your neck if you walk along the railing, yet you are best on this side of the railing! You are least likely to fall into sin by staying away—and you cannot afford to run risks. We have all heard the old story of the good woman who required a coachman. Two or three young fellows came to seek for the situation. Each of them she saw and questioned alone. The first one had this question put to him, "How near could you drive to danger?" And he said, "I do not doubt but that I could drive within a yard of danger." "Well, well," the lady said, "you will not do for me." When the second came in, the good woman questioned him in like manner, "How near could you drive to danger?" "Within a hair's breath, Madam," he said. "Oh," she said, "that will not suit me at all." A third was asked the same question and he prudently replied, "If you please, Madam, that is one of the things I have never tried. I have always tried to drive as far from danger as I can." "You are the coachman for me," she said, and surely that is the kind of manager we all should have in our households! Oh, let us not so train up our children that in all probability they will run into sin! Let us, on the contrary, exhibit such an example in all things that they may safely follow us. Let us so walk that

they may go step by step where we go and not be cast out of the Church of God as a reproach, nor be cast away from the Presence of God. Rail your houses, then! Do not be afraid of being too strict and too Puritan! There is no fear of that in these days—there is a great deal more danger of bringing solemn judgments on our families through neglecting the worship of God in our households!

IV. THE PREACHER WOULD NOW REMIND HIMSELF THAT THIS CHURCH IS, AS IT WERE, HIS OWN HOUSE AND THAT HE IS BOUND TO RAIL IT.

Many come here, Sabbath after Sabbath, to hear the Gospel. The immense number and the constancy of it surprise me. I do not know why the multitudes come and crowd these aisles. When I preached yesterday in Worcestershire and saw the thronging crowds in every road, I could not help wondering to see them—and the more so because they listened as though I had some novel discovery to make—they listened with all their ears, eyes and mouths! I could but marvel and thank God. Ah, but it is a dreadful thing to remember that so many people hear the Gospel and yet perish under the sound of it! Alas, the Gospel becomes to them a savor of death unto death—and there is no lot so terrible as perishing under a pulpit from which the Gospel is preached!

Now, what shall I say to prevent any of my Hearers falling from this blessed Gospel? Falling from the house of mercy—dashing themselves from the roof of the temple to their ruin? What shall I say to you? I beseech you, do not be hearers only! Do not think that when you come here Sundays, Mondays and Thursdays it is all done! No, it is only begun then! Praying is the end of preaching and to be born-again is the great matter. It is very little to occupy your seat, unless you listen diligently, with willing hearts—looked upon as an end, sitting at services is a wretched waste of time! Dear Hearers, be dissatisfied with yourselves unless you are DOERS of the Word! Let your cry go up to God that you may be born-again. Rest not till you rest in Jesus!

Remember, and I hope this will be another railing, that if you hear the Gospel and it is not blessed to you, still it has a power. If the Sun of Grace does not soften you as it does wax, it will harden you as the sun does clay! If it is not a savor of life unto life, to repeat the text I quoted just now, it will be a savor of death unto death! Oh, do not be blind in the sunlight! Do not perish with hunger in the banqueting house! Do not die of thirst when the Water of Life is before you!

Let me remind you of *what the result of putting away the Gospel will be*. You will soon die. You cannot live forever. In the world to come, what awaits you? What did our Lord say, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” The righteous enter into life eternal, but the ungodly suffer everlasting punishment! I will not dwell upon the terrors of the world to come, but let me remind you that they are yours unless Christ is yours! Death is yours, judgment is yours and Hell will be yours—and all that dreadful wrath which God means when He says, “Beware, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you.” Oh, run

not on in sin, lest you fall into Hell! I would gladly set up this railing to keep you from a dreadful and fatal fall.

Once more, *remember the love of God in Christ Jesus*. I heard, the other day, of a bad boy whom his father had often rebuked and chastened, but the lad grew worse. One day he had been stealing and his father felt deeply humiliated. He talked to the boy, but his warning made no impression. And when he saw his child, so callous, the good man sat down in his chair and burst out crying as if his heart would break. The boy stood very indifferent for a time, but, at last, as he saw the tears falling on the floor and heard his father sobbing, he cried, "Father, don't! Father, don't do that! What do you cry for, Father?" "Ah, my Boy," he said, "I cannot help thinking what will become of you, growing up as you are. You will be a lost man and the thought of it breaks my heart." "O Father!" he said, "pray don't cry. I will be better. Only don't cry and I will not vex you again." Under God, that was the means of breaking down the boy's love of evil—and I hope it led to his salvation. Just like that is Christ to you. He cannot bear to see you die and He weeps over you, saying, "How often would I have blessed you, but you would not!" Oh, by the tears of Jesus, wept over you in effect when He wept over Jerusalem, turn to Him! Let that be a railing to keep you from ruin!

God bless you, and help you to trust in Jesus, and His shall be the praise! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 6:1-14; 30-45.

Verses 1-6. *After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. When Jesus then lifted up His eyes and saw a great company come unto Him, He said unto Philip, Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He said to test him: for He Himself knew what He would do.* That verse is worth thinking over. How often does Christ seem to ask us riddles and place us in difficulties, so that we begin to say, "What will come of this? How shall we escape from this temptation, or how shall we stand under this trial?" He Himself knows what He will do and it is a very blessed thing when our faith, being tried, shows itself to be strong enough to leave the burden with Him who can bear it, and to leave the difficulty with Him who can meet it! "He Himself knew what He would do."

7. *Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that everyone of them may take a little.* That is our way. When our faith is little, we begin calculating the pennyworths that are needed, and we make them out to be so much more than we possess or can possibly scrape together. That is not faith, it is reason—poor, dim, shallow reason which forgets the Infinite and begins to calculate its own limited and insufficient forces!

8-10. *One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said unto Him, there is a lad here who has five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. When Christ bids men sit down, He has a dainty carpet for them to sit upon. "There was much grass in the place." One might have thought that some of those people would have refused to sit down, for it is not everybody who will sit at a table that has nothing on it—but God knows how to move the hearts of men, so these people, if they had not strong faith, yet had faith enough to do as they were told—I wish that we all had as much faith as that!*

11. *And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. "As much as they would." Note those words, for they are the rule at Christ's feasts. Of earthly things, He gives us as much as we need—and of heavenly things, as much as we would! "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." "According to your faith be it unto you."*

12, 13. *When they were filled, He said unto His disciples, gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. "Waste not, want not." Heavenly economy is to be practiced in the things of God. Christ is not stingy, but He is no waster.*

14. *Then those men, when they had seen the miracle which Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world. They were convinced through their stomachs! They came to this conviction merely through eating and drinking—and that faith which comes by the senses is no faith at all, or it is a sensual faith which cannot save the soul! These people who came to this belief through eating, were very poor followers of Christ, as He said to them, "You seek Me not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled."*

30-32. *They said therefore unto Him, What sign show You then, that we may see, and believe You? What do You work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from Heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from Heaven; but My Father gives you the true bread from Heaven. Jesus did not say to them, "I gave that bread to your fathers in the wilderness," as He might truly have said. It was not Moses who fed their fathers in the wilderness, it was God who had fed them and if they would but think, they would clearly see that it was so. But the Master took them on to another tack and led their thoughts to a higher topic.*

33, 34. *For the Bread of God is He which comes down from Heaven, and gives life unto the world. Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. Not knowing the meaning of their own request.*

35-39. *And Jesus said unto them, I am the Bread of Life: He that comes to Me shall never hunger, and He that believes on Me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That you also have seen Me, and believe not. All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will. Many want to pry between the closed leaves of God's secret purposes to see what His will is. Now this is it—"This is the Father's will."*

39-44. *Which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise Him up at the last day. The Jews then murmured at Him, because He said, I am the Bread which came down from Heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, I came down from Heaven; Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him. Note how that Doctrine of Sovereign Grace is used by Christ. He seems to wave it, like a lighted torch, in the faces of His adversaries, as if He said to them, "I did not expect you to understand Me. I did not expect you to receive Me. Do not think that you surprise Me by your action. Imagine not that you frustrate My eternal purposes by rejecting Me. I knew that you would not receive Me and that, as you are, you could not come to Me, for 'no man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him.'"*

44, 45. *And I will raise Him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me. May we so hear and so learn of the Father that we may come to Jesus Christ!*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 533, 546.

—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.**

CAMP LAW AND CAMP LIFE

NO. 2177

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 14,
1890.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, BEFORE LEAVING HOME
FOR HIS WINTER'S REST.**

***“For the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you, and to give up your enemies before you, therefore shall your camp be holy that He sees no unclean thing in you, and turn away from you.”
Deuteronomy 23:14.***

I WILL scarcely allude to the context, which you ought to notice at home, but I must say as much as this—the Lord cared for the cleanliness of His people while they were in the wilderness, literally so—and this text is connected with a sanitary regulation of the wisest possible kind. What I admire in it is that God the Glorious, the All-Holy, should stoop to legislate about such things. Such attention was very necessary for health and even for life, and the Lord, in condescending to it, conveys a severe rebuke to Christian people who have been careless in matters respecting health and cleanliness. Saintly souls should not be lodged in filthy bodies. God takes note of matters which persons who are falsely spiritual speak of as beneath their observation. If the Lord cares for such things, we must not neglect them. But oh, what condescension on His part that His Spirit should dictate to Moses concerning these grosser concerns! I bow before the majesty of a condescension to which nothing is too low.

Observe, also, how it shows us the all-reaching character of the Law of Moses. It overshadowed everything! It guided, arranged, restrained or suggested all the acts of the people under its tutorship. Wherever they were, in their most public or private acts, the people were always under the supervision of the Law. By reason of their sinfulness, this holy code of regulations became a yoke which they were not able to bear. Still, it was a very necessary and salutary Law, for which they should have been grateful at all times, since it was for their good in every respect and tended to bless them both spiritually and physically, socially and religiously.

Dear Friends, the great thing that I would bring out at this time is the *spiritual* lesson of the text—*how the Lord would have His people clean in all things*. The God of Holiness commands and loves purity—purity of all kinds. He says, “Be you clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.” Cleanliness of body is sometimes neglected by persons professing godliness—I speak to their shame. It ought not to be possible for Grace and dirt to meet in the same person. I must confess I feel a great horror at Christian people who are so dirty that one cannot sit in the same pew with them without nausea. This is the trial of many visitors among poor people who

profess religion, that certain of them are not clean in their houses and in their clothes.

Filth may be expected in persons of unclean hearts, but those who have been purified in spirit should do their utmost to be pure in flesh, clothes and dwelling. If cleanliness is next to godliness—and I am sure it is—it ought to be observed by those who profess godliness. Does not the same text which says, “having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,” also say, “and our bodies washed with pure water”? The Christ who redeemed us did not redeem us that we should be covered with filthiness! He has redeemed the body as well as the soul and He has made it to be the temple of the Holy Spirit—surely we must cleanse His temple and not suffer it to be defiled.

I like the idea of those sailors on board ship who knew that the ship was going down, and therefore put on their Sunday best that they might die as clean and neat as they could. I would not care to die in filth, or to live in it. A Christian should be clean in all things—in his person, in his house, in his garments and in his habits. For his own sake, but especially for the sake of others, he should carefully observe sanitary laws lest he be found guilty of the command which says, “You shall not kill.”

Now, if God speaks about this matter of cleanliness, I am sure I may do so and *ought* to do so. If anyone is offended let him take a basin of clean water and wash the offense away. If anyone thinks me personal, let him have a personal bath and so obliterate the mark. If cleanliness is a point which God does not omit, He would not have His servants silent about it. Still, I pass on from that to the greater lesson of the passage. You will notice that the Presence of God in the midst of His people was all-reaching and everywhere. No part of the camp was exempt from God’s walking in it. Not merely in the Holy Place was God, or in the Holy of Holies between the cherubim, but He was everywhere in the streets of the canvas city and in the outskirts.

When troops of Israelites went out to war and consequently cast up temporary camps, they were to remember that God was still walking in the midst of them—and this was to be the great motive power of their lives—the Presence of God! The high privilege of being a people near unto Jehovah involved continual watching that nothing might offend His Sacred Majesty. O Sirs, every man, whether a Christian or not, ought to remember that God is everywhere—that there is no escaping from His Presence—that even the shades of night furnish no veil under which we may sin with impunity! But as for the *chosen*, who know the Lord, it is for them to have the most respect unto One so glorious, and yet so graciously near. We may ever pray that—

***“Our weaker passions may not dare
Consent to sin, for God is there.”***

He is daring, indeed, who would sin in the face of God. Sin to God’s teeth? Approach the Throne of the Great King and be disloyal there? God forbid! The Lord forgive us our audacities! There is a special Presence, higher and other than the universal Presence of God and as this is the peculiar privilege of the saints, it should be to them a constant check, or a perpetual spur. The Presence of God is to us a check to evil and a spur to

good. About this Presence and its effects, I am going to speak at this time, as the Spirit of the Lord may help me. Oh, for an anointing from the Presence of the Lord! There are three things which I shall speak of. The first is *an instructive comparison*, which I may draw from this text. The text speaks about the camp of Israel and that is a comparison which may very aptly set forth the nature of the Church of God, for the Church is *spiritually* a camp.

Secondly, here is *a special privilege*—"The Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you, and to give up yours enemies before you." And then, thirdly, here is demand for *corresponding conduct*. "Therefore, because the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, therefore shall your camp be holy, that He sees no unclean thing in you, and turn away from you." May this lesson be learned by us all this day!

I. First, then, AN INSTRUCTIVE COMPARISON. The Church of God is in many respects comparable to a camp. It is a camp *for separation*. Men who are encamped are separated from the traders, householders and others near whom they are tarrying. They are separated especially from the adversaries with whom they are at war. When you come near to a camp you are challenged by the sentry, for you must not come there without warrant. In wartime a picket is sure to be in your path whichever way you come near to the camp, for during a campaign warriors are a separated people and must keep themselves so.

Such ought the Church of God to be. We are crusaders and are separated from the mass for the service of the Cross which we bear on our hearts. We are in an enemy's country and we must keep ourselves to ourselves very much, or else we shall certainly fail of that holy military discipline which the Captain of our salvation would have us strictly enforce. An attempt is being made, here and there, to make the Church like the world and it has already been carried out by actual experiment. The most ridiculous and even discreditable things are, in such cases, done in the name of religion and under cover of Church purposes. O Friends, this custom comes from the lowest depth and is full of the cunning of Satan! It will be our destruction if the attempt should succeed!

The great object of a Christian should be to separate the Church more and more entirely from the world. Our Lord was not of this world, but was crucified outside the gate—"Let us go forth therefore unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach." The reproach today, dreaded by feeble minds, is that of being narrow-minded, bigoted, strict, precise. Let us willingly take it up. It is *His* reproach—let us not attempt to escape it. Let it be our resolve that as far as ever we can, we will be nonconformists to the ways even of worldly Christians. Let us not be conformed to this world, but transformed in the spirit of our minds. Ours is the holy dissidence of spiritual dissent from evil, the sacred separation of Separatists from error.

Are we a camp, dear Friends? The question might lead us to judge others—I will put it in the singular. Am I a soldier of the Cross, a follower of the Lamb? If so, I must, as a soldier, live in my barracks, or abide in my lines. I must be separated and I must, as a follower of the Lamb, "go forth unto Him outside the camp," being determined to live the separated life as He sets it before me. Every true Church, then, is a camp for separation.

Next, it is a camp, because *it is on the defensive*. As I have said before, we are marching through an enemy's country. The children of Israel marched through the wilderness and the Amalekites frequently harassed them and slew the hindmost of them—as the Amalekites harass us and, alas, they slay the hindmost of *us*! It is not those that are at the front for their Captain, not those who follow close to the standard, nor those who go forth armed in His strength that fall by the enemy. Those who play about in the rear—who gather up the stones of the desert and hoard them up as a treasure—it is these upon whom the Amalekites pounce!

But their arrows are far flying and none of us is safe from the enemy, except as the Lord keeps us. Therefore we must go about armed at all times. I heard say of a certain clergyman, that he told his bishop, when he went to a ball, that he was “off duty”—but his bishop very properly replied, “When is a clergyman off duty?” I put the same question to a Christian, “When are you off duty?” Never! The policeman wears a badge on his arm to show that he is on duty—you wear nothing upon your arm—it is upon your whole self! Buried with the Lord in Baptism, the sacred watermark is on you from head to foot—the token that from now on you are dead to the world and are alive in newness of life! You cannot strip yourself of so comprehensive a distinction. It is impossible to erase it. It is an indelible token and if you are false to it, then you are traitors, indeed!

If you are living as you should, you are living unto Christ, always and ever, in every place and at all times. You are to serve God in your enjoyments, as well as in your employments—in your leisure as much as in your labor. You are to serve Him, not only in what is mistakenly called His House, but also in *your own house*. Yes, and you, yourself, are to always be the temple of the living God! Brothers and Sisters, we are soldiers at all times and must never doff our uniforms! We must keep rank and march in close order, for every day is a battle for the Church of God! There is no truce between the Church and error, between the saint and sin! If there is a truce, it is an unholy one and must be broken, for God Himself has proclaimed eternal war between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent! Our condition is one of warfare and nothing else, until the last great victory shall crush the serpent's head. The Church is a camp, for it is on the defensive.

It is a camp, too, especially, because *it is always assailing the powers of darkness*. It is carrying the war into the enemy's territory. That, no doubt, is the special intention of the words of our text. Read the ninth verse, “When the host goes forth against your enemies, then keep you from every wicked thing.” Learn, then, that we are to *go forth* against the enemy. It is not for the Church of God to protect her own borders and think, “This is enough”—she must go forth to conquer fresh territory for her Lord! There used to be in our Churches too much of contentedness with isolation and inactivity. The hymn went up from a quiet, do-nothing assembly—

**“We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground,
A little spot enclosed by Grace
Out of the world's wide wilderness.”**

We dare not feel content to let the wilderness remain what it is! We may not give up vast regions to the dragon and the owl. No, no, dear Friends, we are going to break up more ground and make the little spot into a far wider space. And if the garden is walled around, we hope to build a wall round many more acres of ground and so enlarge the garden of the Great King!

The Church of God is like fire and you cannot say to fire, "You must burn comfortably at the corner of that haystack and never think of going any farther." "No," says the fire, "I will burn it all down." "But there are farm buildings yonder—do not touch those sheds and barns." The fierce fire is insatiable. It never stops while there is anything to be consumed. Even so, a true Church has within herself an ambition for her Lord that His kingdom may be extended everywhere! And that ambition is as insatiable as that of Alexander, who a conquered world could scarcely content. If there were only one sinner left, it would be worth the while of all the saved millions to continue to pray day and night for that one sinner and to set all its tongues moving to tell to that one sinner the Gospel of Christ!

Alas, we are a very long way off from having a lone soul to watch over! A few are saved and untold millions are perishing! Feeble are the lamps which as yet are kindled—the vast proportion of the world is wrapped in tenfold night. We are as yet only a handful of corn on the top of the mountains and our desire should be to grow till "the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." We have a world to conquer and we cannot afford to loiter! We have a kingdom to set up for the Lord of Hosts and we must not sleep, for the adversaries of the Lord are raging! We are an army, sworn to war against the Canaanites of error and sin—to cast down their walled cities, to break their idols—and to cut down their groves.

The Church of God is the great army of peace, purity, liberty, love—she wars against war, she wars against sin, she wars against oppression, she wars against falsehood, uncleanness, intemperance, unrighteousness—and her fight has only yet begun. Do you not feel, my Brethren, dwelling in this wicked city of London, that our appropriate description is a camp?

And next, dear Friends, the Church of God is a camp because *we are on the march*. A camp is pitched in one spot for temporary purposes, for the army is moving on tomorrow and then the camp will be in another place. The Israelites, especially, were not *dwelling* in the desert—they were only marching through it into the land that God had promised them. It is well for us to remember that we are, ourselves, in a movable camp, marching, marching onward, marching forward—ever marching and moving! This is not our rest. We are not at home. We are on foreign land. Alas, I am afraid that we do not realize this, but are like the children of Israel who took 40 years in the wilderness to perform a journey which, I suppose, might have been accomplished in 40 days or less.

It was not far, after all, from Egypt to Canaan. We should think nothing of it as a journey now. And even for that great mass of people, who necessarily traveled slowly, it needed not to have been a long passage—but they took 40 years over it because they marched this way and that way, in endless mazes, lost, wandering rather than journeying towards a definite

spot! Do you not think that a great many Christian people are practicing the same method of motion without progress? Have you not seen some of them, like the King of France, march up a hill and down again? Is not that the way with most? Bravely they lift the lance and hold the shield. They rush forth to the fight. They ride round the enemy and take stock of him—and come home to tell what they have seen—and that is all they do!

Multitudes are forever playing at being Christians. Do you not note their childish seesaw, up and down, up and down? And their movement leaves them no higher than at the first. God save us from this! The camp must go onward. Thus says the Lord, “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.” We ought to be advancing in Divine Grace, in knowledge, in earnestness, in holiness, in usefulness—and if not, we scarcely resemble the figure of a camp.

Yet, once more, no doubt a camp, as formed *for temporary purposes*, was a token of the Church, for although the Church stands still and abides, yet in her individual members she is subject to the same law of decay, death and change as the rest of the world. Soon shall the camp cease and the soldiers become *citizens*, and the tents be exchanged for mansions. The Church is militant upon the earth for a season only. We are here today and gone tomorrow. O Brothers and Sisters, we are at present rather a camp than a city, for we pass away and our Brethren also, as the days fly by.

I remember this Church and congregation 36 years ago and my Brother, William Olney. *Alas, my Brother, W. Olney has himself since crossed the stream!* Behind me will recollect it, too, but neither he nor I can recall all the names of our Brother soldiers who were with us then. They are gone from us at our Captain’s call. I say not that they are lost, for they are not so—but they are lost to us for present aid. You cannot say that a thing is lost when you know where it is and we know where they are—but they are not here and we sadly miss them. Others have sprung up, but a whole generation has passed away. Part of our legion have forded the dividing stream—

**“And we are to the margin come,
And soon expect to die.”**

To us, also, there remains a rest, but we recollect that here we have no continuing city, we seek one to come. We endeavor to make the camp as comfortable as the desert will permit, but it can never be a home.

When you are in the East, your tent-bed awaits you. You sleep well, you wake up, there is your breakfast. But very soon they roll up the tent, pull up the poles and put the whole thing on camels—and you are again homeless on the burning sand. You can never reckon upon anything like steadfastly abiding in one place when you are following camp life. Such is the life of the Believer—camp life is his lot—and it is well for him to be prepared to rough it. Here we are in a tabernacle, that is, a tent which is to be taken down—but we are going to a city that has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God! We have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, and we are wending our way there—but, as yet, we are like Bedouin Arabs, or like our own soldiers on a campaign when they have no permanent barracks—but abide in tents.

We remember, very sadly, that when rough men get into camp—and soldiers, as a rule are rough enough—they think that they may do anything. In this respect the camp of God is to differ from all other camps, as much as white from black. To this day it is a sort of popular error that a soldier may indulge himself in uncleanness and be less blamable than other people. I have heard the remark, “The young man is in the army. What can you expect of him?” But God’s people are to be soldiers and theirs is to be camp life—and their camp is holy and so must each one of them be. Thus says the Lord, “When the host goes forth against your enemies, then keep you from every wicked thing.” “The Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you, and to give up your enemies before you; therefore shall your camp be holy; that He sees no unclean thing in you, and turn away from you.”

A camp of angels should not be more holy than a Church of saints among whom the Lord God has taken up His abode! Thus much upon the very instructive figure of the text.

II. Secondly, I come to notice A SPECIAL PRIVILEGE. The text mentions a privilege specially promised to Israel, but I am sure, to a very high and real degree, enjoyed by ourselves. “The Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you, and to give up your enemies before you.” By this walking is intended *a special Presence of love*. The Lord is present in His Church in a higher sense than in the world. The Lord walks in the midst of His Church as a man takes pleasure in the walks of his garden. The Church is the garden of the Lord, His Paradise. “His delights are with the sons of men.” He looks on this one, and on that—all plants of His own right-hand planting—He looks to see where the knife is needed, that He may prune the vine, or where refreshment is needed, that He may water the roots.

The Lord, with unutterable care, is in the midst of His Church. Remember how He says, “I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” If you want to find God on earth, you must look among His chosen! Where is a father most at home but with his children? God has said, “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.” While Israel was a dweller in tents the Ark of the Covenant was among them, the token of the Lord’s Presence—and in His warring Church the great Captain of the host is ever lovingly near! Hear how He gives the assurance, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

There are special lines of love to His own which make us, sometimes, ask, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and not unto the world?” But so it is our Lord Jesus walks up and down our ranks and sees our order or disorder, our courage or our cowardice—and this is the best reason why we should behave ourselves aright. He loves us and we must not grieve Him. See the force of this argument, “The Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp; therefore shall your camp be holy.” God is present in the camp of His people *with a special Presence of observation*. He sees all things, but His eyes are, in the first place, fixed on His Church. With burning glance He searches the very heart of professors. I tremble while I speak this word! It is often bowing me to the dust.

With regard to the ungodly, I may say of them, “The times of this ignorance God winks at,” but to His people He says, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all *your* iniquities.” There is a discipline in the House of God which is carried on, not by Church officers, nor by the Church itself, but by the Providence of God. Men die before their time and others are sick who might be well—sick, I mean, through ill behavior in the Church of God. Thus says the Apostle—“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” If you are not my child I have nothing to say about your behavior—I leave you to your own father. But if you are my boy, my child at home, I must speak to you, I must correct you for I bear a responsibility towards you. So it is with God. He will bear much from the ungodly which He will not endure from His own people.

Here is a text which I would like to wrap up in my heart—“The Lord your God is a jealous God.” That wondrous love of His must have jealousy linked with it. Our God loves us so much, so entirely—with all the Infinity of His Godhead—that if we do not love Him in return and yield the holy fruits of love—He is grieved and angry. “The Lord your God is a jealous God.” See, then, the argument—if it is so, that God is specially watchful over His Church, let your camp be holy. The Lord cries, “Be you holy; for I am holy.” “Be you clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.” It is not for Jehovah’s camp to be fouled. He would not have any putrid matter, anything offensive remain within the camp literally—and spiritually He will have us keep all filthiness away from His Church. He will have us just, true, pure, sincere, holy—and if we are not so—His anger will burn like fire. Lord, have mercy upon us! Christ, have mercy upon us! What more can we say?

Again, dear Friends, the peculiar privilege of Israel is to have *a special Presence of salvation*. “The Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you.” God is with His people, to help them in their times of trouble, to rescue them out of danger, to answer their cries in their necessity, to save them in the hour of temptation. He is with us to deliver us in all things in which we require deliverance! Have we not found Him so? I could touch this string with no feeble or wavering hand. This very week I have found Him with me, to deliver me in many things—many things that seemed to lay me low—matters which concerned the Lord’s Church. Trouble was there, but the Lord was there, also. Oh, what a blessing it is! “The Lord is there.” Have you any troubles and difficulties, dear Friend, and are you a child of God? Do you belong to Christ? Well, the Lord is with His people to deliver them. Should not this be a grand argument why the camp should be holy, for if He hears our prayers, we are bound to obey His precepts. If He will give us our will, let His will be done on earth, even as it is in Heaven. God help us to do so!

And, next, the Lord is with the camp of His people, not only to deliver them, but as *a special Presence for victory*. He routs their enemies and gives His saints success. All the hope that the Church has of doing any good in the world must come from the Lord’s being in the midst of her! If any error is to be trampled down as straw for the dunghill. If any sinner is to be snatched like a lamb from between the jaws of the lion. If any dark

neighborhood is to be enlightened, it must be because God is with His people. "Without Me you can do nothing." This word is most true! It is He and He alone, that can give up our enemies before us. Very well, then, let the camp be holy, lest we lose that Presence and He is gone.

Once more, it is *a special Presence in covenant*. "The Lord *your* God." Listen to that word—"Jehovah your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you." The living God is our God! Men have many gods, even in England—gods of their own making—but my God is the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! I believe in the Old Testament God who is the same as the God of the New Testament. I abhor the idea of a new Godhead! Jehovah is One and the same to me. But oh, if He is our God by special covenant. If He has taken us to be His people and we have taken Him to be our God, it is most delightful—but it involves us in a grave responsibility to be a holy people!

If we can say—

***"'Tis done, the great transaction's done.
I am my Lord's, and He is mine,"***

then let us be holy and let our whole camp be holy! Otherwise our vows are a fiction and our professions are a lie! Do we wish to provoke the Lord and to vex His Spirit? The Lord save us from this evil! See, then, the special privilege! I have already told you what it involves.

III. So now I have only to dwell for a minute or two upon the last point a little more distinctly—CORRESPONDING CONDUCT. "Therefore shall your camp be holy that He see no unclean thing in you, and turn away from you." Observe, then, that *this rule, that the camp be holy, applies to the most common places wherein we are found*. "Therefore shall your camp be holy." As I have already said, men generally think that they may take great license in a camp. But the Lord says, "Therefore shall your camp be holy." When you are out for a holiday, be holy. When you say, "Now we have one or two friends coming to the house and we will indulge ourselves somewhat," be holy and let the conversation and the entertainment be holy. Let not only the Church meeting be holy, but let the family gathering be holy, whether at Christmas, or on a bank holiday, or at another time.

Let the common meals be holy, no excess or murmuring being tolerated. Let the board and the bed be holy. Let the body and the mind be holy. Let the most common act you do be holiness to the Lord. Let the bells upon the horses ring out only this note, "Holiness unto the Lord." "Holiness becomes Your house, O God," but holiness becomes, also, all the houses of Your people. Holiness is the ordained livery of a servant of God and he that does not wear this garment has disgraced himself and his Master. He is wearing, in fact, the livery of the King's enemies! Let him mind what he is doing.

If my memory does not deceive me, when Oliver Cromwell was first contending with the king, the soldiers who joined him were mostly gentlemen farmers and they wore their own buff coats—and as many on the other side were dressed much the same, mistakes were made—and, in a rough-and-tumble fight, they did not know cavalier from roundhead. So Cromwell said, upon a certain occasion, that all his soldiers must be dressed in

a certain color and not a man should be in his troop who did not come by such a day with such a coat on.

Well, you say, why should they wear a uniform? Some of them did not like it. But his orders were peremptory, that not a man should be with him if he did not wear the regulation dress, since by their common array they knew each other and could not be mistaken in a scuffle. Holiness is the white raiment of the Believer—be sure that you put it on, because otherwise we shall not know you—and the world will not know you and you will be mistaken for an enemy. I am afraid you will be treated as having gone over to the enemy if we catch you in the usurper's black instead of the king's white! The Holy Spirit arrays you in the white raiment of holiness that you may shine out bright and clear and distinct before the sons of men.

But now, notice this, too. While this holiness pertained to their most common things, it was also ordered that *every unclean thing was to be put from them*. "That He see no unclean thing in you." This is an awful text—I will not preach about it, but I will just repeat it to you again—"That He see no unclean thing in you." Ah, me! We often see unclean things in ourselves, do we not? Yes, and we often overlook much uncleanness and do not notice it because our eyes are dim. We have lost, perhaps, the *spiritual* nostril that would smell the unclean thing. Our senses have become perverted by the foul world in which we live. But then, think of this—the pure and holy God—the thrice holy God—He speaks of Himself in this sort, "That *He* see no unclean thing in you."

Brothers, Sisters, what a house-cleaning this calls for! What hard sweeping this requires—that, "*He* see no unclean thing in you"! Remember, the pith of that text concerning the Paschal Lamb lies in God's sight of the sprinkled blood. Notice, "When *I* see the blood, I will pass over you." So here the very force of the text lies—"that *He* see no unclean thing in you." Oh, for Grace and watchfulness to keep clear of touching the unclean thing! Let us come continually to the washing place—even to the opened Fountain. Let us beseech the cleansing Spirit to operate as with fire and burn His purifying way through and through our souls that in the Church of God the Lord may not see any unclean thing in any one of us!

Note well *the fearful warning which is added*. If there is in the camp an unclean thing tolerated and delighted in and He sees it—if it becomes conspicuous and grievous to *Him*, then the worst consequences will follow—"Lest *He* turn away from you." Oh, what would happen to us if the Lord were to turn away from us as a Church? Horror takes hold on me at the thought! The pastor will die in due time—that is a small matter—for the Lord can send another. But if the Lord were to pass away from us, what an overwhelming desolation! Ichabod would be written in large capital letters across this house if the Lord were gone! And yet my wonder often is that He has not gone when I remember the unclean things that I have to see and mourn over!

I see very little compared with what the Lord sees, but I see enough to make me tremble! The Lord sees much about us that grieves Him, even when we think there is nothing amiss. Let us pray that the Lord does not go from us! I invite you earnestly to pray that during my absence God may

keep all the camp in holy working order—that He may see no unclean thing—and may not turn away from His people. O Lord, in Your love bear with us and abide with us evermore! I have done, but there is a little fragment that follows my text which I want some of you to get before I go. Read this. This follows the text. It is a curious thing that it should follow the text. I think that it is put here on purpose for me to have a word for the sinner before I have done.

“You shall not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto you: he shall dwell with you, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of your gates, where it pleases him best: you shall not oppress him.” I wonder whether any runaway has come into our place of worship tonight? Certainly there are some of Satan’s slaves here! I would recommend you to run away from the devil and not give him a moment’s notice. Flee from his service directly! There is no getting away from sin except by instantaneous flights. Run for it! Run at once! Steal away to Jesus! Do not stop to think twice! The prodigal said, “I will arise, and go to my father,” and he arose and went to his father.

Deliberating about it and giving notice never answers anybody’s purpose in the matter of repentance unto life. Instantaneous flight is your wisdom! Run away in a twinkling! If you do run away and get among the Lord’s people, we will never give you up to your old master. He may come here after you, but we know him, and are not to be deceived by him in this matter. He has come here after many—but we have not given up any of his runaways and, by God’s Grace, we will never part with you, but defy the man-catcher to take you away! Jesus says, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out”—and so, you see, He will harbor you and not return you to your master.

There were slaves in Moses’ day, but if they ran away nobody ever sent them back to their master and therefore it was not much of slavery, after all. The devil has many slaves, but if they run away to Jesus they shall never be sent back! Come, then! Dare to be free from Satan’s power! Strike for liberty! Your tyrant lord has no right to you! I know you sold yourself, but you were not your own to sell—you were stolen goods! The devil can have no more property in you than you had in yourself and that was nothing, for you are not your own! Fly away, poor hunted Dove, to Jesus’ wounds and when once you get there, the hawk cannot reach you! Safe in the Rock of Ages you shall dwell as a dove in the clefts.

Though I have dealt faithfully with the uncleanness of professing Believers, I now invite the vilest and the foulest to come to Jesus for safety and liberty—

***“There is a Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”***

Ransomed sinners may dwell among us, in whatever place they shall choose! Neither will we oppress them with hard questions or irksome duties, but we will bind them to be free as we are ourselves bound to liberty in the name of the Lord our God! God bless you, dear Friends, and during my absence may you be fed with the finest of the wheat! May the blessing

of the Lord rest upon you! If we do not meet again in this wilderness below, may we meet, when camp life is over, in the City above, to go no more out forever! The blessing of the Lord rest on you evermore!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Peter 2.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—668, 745, 87.**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

BELOVED FRIENDS—Up to this date I have had no opportunity to enjoy rest, but have been at first suffering and now slowly recovering. This, however, is not lost time if I have but Grace to improve the trial. Let us always seek sanctification through affliction rather than escape from it. I have no question that there is great wisdom in the Lord’s laying aside His instruments. It is for His own Glory, for thereby He shows that He is not in need of them—and it is for their humbling—for hereby they learn how deep is their need of Him. The uninterrupted reception of blessing through one channel might breed in our foolish hearts an idolatrous confidence in the means and therefore there comes a break in the use of that means, that the Lord may be the more tenderly remembered.

We may be sure that if the Lord dries up a cistern, it is because He would have us fly to the Fountain of inexhaustible strength. I desire to rejoice that, in all these 36 years, with sicknesses so frequently upon me, I have never been compelled to drop either the weekly sermon or the monthly magazine. There has either been an interval of power, or I have been a little forward with the work, by His Grace, when the stroke has laid me aside. May I not say “Up to now the Lord has helped me”? Having received help of God, I continue unto this day, and I shall abide in my calling so long as there is work for me to do for my Lord.

I send my loving Christian salutations to all my hearers and readers, with earnest request for their prayers for myself, personally, and for a blessing upon the sermons and all the work at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The times are out of course, the walls of human confederacies are crumbling, the fashion of this world is passing away—“but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.”

Mentone, December 6, 1890.

Yours in loving service for our Lord Jesus,

C. H. SPURGEON.

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

THE ROOT THAT BEARS WORMWOOD NO. 723

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 2, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Lest there should be among you a root that bears gall and wormwood.”
Deuteronomy 29:18.***

THE people of Israel, after all the wonderful things which God had done for them, should have felt themselves bound forever to their father’s God. They had received the clearest possible proof that Jehovah alone was the living and true God. How could they debase themselves to worship graven images when they had seen such signs and wonders worked by their great I AM? Surely idolatry after such a history as theirs must have been sinful to the worst degree.

They were, however, in great danger from two or three circumstances which in the chapter before us are set before them as a ground of caution. “You know how you dwelt in the land of Egypt,” is the first caution. They had dwelt so long in the midst of the idolatrous Egyptians that it would have been strange if they had not become tinctured with the idolatrous spirit which was so powerful in the land of Ham. Alas, Israel’s hosts drank deep into Egypt’s superstitions, and not long had they been in the wilderness before they made a golden ox, contemptuously called by Moses a golden calf, in imitation of the ox so solemnly adored in Egypt.

Probably the mixed multitude never wholly ceased from idol-worship, for we find it said in Amos, “Have you offered unto Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? And you have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which you made to yourselves.” The Egyptians were infamous among all nations as almost indiscriminate worshippers of innumerable objects. They not only worshipped beasts, comely in proportion and useful to men, but they bowed down before the snake and the crocodile. They worshipped the beetle that is engendered from filth and the frog that comes up from the slime. “Oh, happy nation,” says one of the old satirists, “whose gods grow in their own gardens,” for they actually bowed down before onions and leeks, as though these were the gods that made Heaven and earth!

Knowing, as we do, that depraved nature is so strongly inclined to worship visible objects, we do not wonder that the contagion of Egyptian

idolatry infected the children of Israel. Remember again, that in passing through the wilderness, all the people that Israel came in contact with for forty years were idolaters. With the exception of Moses' father-in-law, who may have been a priest of God, a *spiritual* worshipper, it does not appear that there were any tribes on the face of the earth that worshipped the Most High. When the children of Israel passed by Moab or Edom, or when they came into contact with the subjects of Sihon or Og, they found them all prostrate in the same reverence of idols, bowing down before abominations—idols of wood and silver and gold.

We are all too much affected by our surroundings. The imitative faculty is very forcible, especially in a direction pleasing to our fallen nature. And when these people found themselves to be singular and alone, worshipping God whom they could not see, while their neighbors practiced gorgeous rites and mystic ceremonies, it is no wonder that they were strongly tempted to set up idols. Yet further, when they had passed through the forty years in the wilderness, what kind of country were they to enter into? Not a land in which there was a temple to Jehovah—or where the inhabitants would all assist them in cultivating the worship of the only true God—but a land that was full of idols! Where every green hill was consecrated to a false deity. Where the stones of the valley were piled up into a thousand altars. Where every city had its own peculiar deity!

The country was full of temptations to allure them from allegiance to the true God. Israel should have been faithful under every test, but he who knows what is in man will perceive the need of the heavenly caution, and of the warning of our text by which the Lord assured His people that to rebel against Him would be to plant a root that bears gall and wormwood.

Let us apply their history to ourselves. Remember the Egypt out of which we have been redeemed by mighty Grace! Remember the sins which once had the mastery over us! Do we wear no relics of our bondage? Is it so easy to shake off old habits? Is there no hankering after the flesh pots of worldly pleasure? I am sure we have to protest before the Lord's people that we are in very great danger from our former habits, and that the twitching of the old Adam are not things to be laughed at! Would not our evil hearts soon lead us back to our old slavery if the Grace of God did not prevent it?

Look, moreover, at the people among whom we dwell! Is this vain world a friend to Divine Grace? Do you not, on the contrary, find it to be your perpetual foe? Why, you cannot go out into your trade, or follow your occupation—no, worse—you cannot even tarry at home without meeting with temptations! This *world* does not worship the true God. It bows down before gods of its own choosing. They may not be of wood or stone, but they are, nonetheless, dangerous! Men say unto their lusts or to their

pleasures, to their persons, their intellects, their gains, “These are our gods! These are the pursuits which we count worthy of our immortal minds!”

Are not Believers tempted to follow the same ends and objects? Does not our personal advantage frequently aim at the throne of our hearts? Do we never find our losses, or our gains endeavoring to thrust Jehovah from the rightful dominion of our souls? I am sure, Brothers and Sisters, from the oldest to the youngest, we all feel we are in peculiar danger from the people among whom we dwell. And will it be any better in the future? Have we any reason to expect that the places to which we shall journey between this and the hour of death will be any less full of temptation? May we not expect that as it *has* been, so it *will* be even till the end comes? May we not have to meet with temptations even more severe than those which we have encountered? May not the Providence of God call us into circumstances where we will pass through severer tests, and our piety have to endure yet heavier trials? It is probable it will be so.

Until we reach our home in Glory, we shall have need to be often warned and put on our guard lest our evil hearts of unbelief should depart from the living God, and we should become as the rest of mankind are—a people that forget God—and that offer themselves unto strange lords and follow their own devices. These were the Lord’s reasons for warning, and these are my motives, this day, for reminding you that sin is an evil and ruinous thing, “a root that bears gall or hemlock, and wormwood.” Sin, in the text, is styled a root that produces *bitterness*. This is our main thought this morning. If we have time we shall institute the enquiry as to whether that root is in our hearts, and then, thirdly, we shall show the way of deliverance from the root and from its fruit.

I. SIN IS THE ROOT WHICH BEARS GALL AND WORMWOOD. That this was true in the case of the Israelites is very manifest. Their history tells us the whole generation which came up out of Egypt died in the wilderness because of their sins. Their sin, then, was a root which bore to them the poisonous hemlock, for they left a line of graves along their line of march as a sad memorial of their iniquities—only Joshua and Caleb ever entered into the promised land.

At terrible intervals their sins bore fearful fruit for them. Sometimes the fiery serpents bit them. At other times the plague broke forth among the people, or the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the rebellious. We find them put to rout because of their sin at Ai although they had been victorious at Jericho, for Achan had hidden in his camp the accursed thing which was a root that bore to his nation wormwood and gall.

After Israel had driven out the heathenish nations they gave way to many forms of idolatry—and their land was invaded and they were

enslaved or driven into holes and dens. Famine devastated the land and pestilence laid it waste till the repenting people cried unto God in the bitterness of their sorrows and He raised them up a Jephthah, or a Gideon, a Samson or a Barak—but on each occasion the mother of their sorrow was their *sin*—the cause of their lamentation was their turning aside from their God.

Then came the days of the kings of Israel when the people for awhile feared the Lord. But at length the heart of the people went aside to the calves of Bethel and they were given over to Assyria and carried away captive after being struck in battles innumerable and reduced to be the lowest of nations. Then remember what became of Judah, which was for a time faithful to God. The eyes of their king were put out and themselves driven into cruel bondage far away from their much-loved land, having before their captivity been subject to sieges and famine so terrible that it is said that the woman who was tender and delicate among them did eat her own children by reason of the terribleness of the siege.

After the Lord had pardoned them and brought them back again and given them a name once more among the nations, they revolted from Him again—they smote His Only-Begotten and crucified the Lord of Glory! And what did He do to them? It shall make both the ears of him that hears it tingle to read the story of the siege of Jerusalem written by one of themselves—Josephus. They were crucified till men lacked wood on which to crucify them! They were sold as slaves till men would not buy them at the price of one farthing each, for Jewish slaves had become so common and were so despised! The plow-share was driven over the very site of Jerusalem, and a mandate made that the Jew should never look towards that city.

They were scattered and banished as they are unto this day. Truly the whole house of Israel is God's witness at this day that sin against Jehovah is a root that bears gall and wormwood. As it was in their case we may rest assured it is in other cases, for God makes no exceptions in His dealings. He is not a judge who punishes one sin and allows another to go unpunished—He deals equal justice to all men. If He spared not Israel, how shall He spare the Gentiles? If Jerusalem escaped not, how shall London escape? If He gave up to the spoiler and to the sword the seed of Abraham His friend, how shall He spare us in the day of His visitation if we sin against Him?

Again, dear Friends, not only does the history of the Jews prove that *sin* is a root of bitterness, but our judgment tells us that it is most fitting it should be so. If sin were in the long run pleasurable, and really produced advantage to man, it would be a very strange arrangement in the Divine economy. The Judge of all the earth must do right, but would it be right that sinning should be rewarded with blessedness? If the root of sin,

instead of bearing gall and wormwood, dropped with honey and streamed with milk, where would be the holiness of the great Governor who so ordained it?

I would even venture to put this to the depraved intellect of those men who rail at Divine justice—I would ask them what they would have? Would they have sin *rewarded*? Would they have *virtue* punished? If so, would not the devil be the most fitting ruler of such a dispensation? What sort of God could He be who should make holiness to bring forth misery, and sin to be the perpetual spring of delight? If any one of us, not absolutely mad, could be put into the position of the governor of the world, so soon as we had made laws should we not at once decree that the violation of law should involve punishment?

Why whenever savages become semi-civilized and form themselves into a little state, one of the first things they do is, having made laws, to lay down penalties for the breach of those laws! And men cannot form a government without penal sanctions. I will defy men to do so! If they will reward the breach of their laws and punish those who keep them, it will not be long before a general revolt and universal mutiny will give the law to the winds. It was right, then, and according to the natural order of things, that rebellion against the Law of the great moral Governor should, in the long run, if not at once, involve sorrow and misery.

This Truth of God is continually being denied and yet is all but self-evident. I believe this is the point of teaching which is just now more assailed than any other, namely, the doctrine of the future punishment of sin. I find it is become quite a popular thing to assert that we who preach of Hell and everlasting punishment libel the Character of God. It is constantly asserted that this doctrine is an old worn-out dogma! And, therefore, we beg to bring it before you once again as being, notwithstanding all the gainsayer may say, the Truth of God.

Let no man deceive himself and think that sin will go unpunished! Let no man, be he ever so specious and his words ever so flattering, lead you to imagine that in the next world God will pass by iniquity, for, as surely as this Book is His Word, sin is a most fearful evil, and the wrath to come will be terrible—so terrible that the hardest language ever used by the most vehement speaker falls infinitely short of what the judgment of God will be when His wrath smokes against the sinner, and His curse descends with full force upon the offender!

Sin is a root which has not always budded and blossomed in this life, but which will bud and blossom and bring forth its fruit in the life to come. And the fruit of sin will be more bitter than hemlock and wormwood. I gather this, first, from my reason. Let an intelligent person only think a minute, and I am sure he will be convinced that there must be a terrible punishment for sin. Remember there are other laws in the

world besides moral laws. There are what is called by the philosopher *physical* laws, that is to say, laws which concern matter rather than mind. Now, if men break *these* laws, does any ill result follow from the violation?

For instance, the law of attraction, or *gravitation*—that certain bodies shall attract other bodies. Can that be infringed without risk? Here is a man who says he does not believe in gravitation. He does not believe, for instance, standing here on this lofty rock, that he shall fall if he springs off into the air. He declares that he means to try the issue with that antiquated old law, and he laughs at Sir Isaac Newton, and everybody else. He says, “I am not to be bound by such a bugbear as this law of gravitation! I am a freethinker and am not to be led by the nose by your physical creeds.”

We warn him, “You will break your neck if you do.” He says, “Do you mean to represent God to me as such a Being, that if I merely violate one of His laws He will actually put me to pain or even kill me? Do not tell me, I know better, and am not to be trammelled by the superstitions of the dark ages.” Yet let him say what he will, his leap will be fatal and his life will pay the penalty of his rashness. If you rebel against gravitation it will crush you up as a man would a beetle, or a fly—and without a particle of pity—will avenge its insulted authority. See the fool leap from the lofty crag into the air! Ah, unhappy wretch, there is no escape for him!

Notwithstanding his religious belief that he would escape, we find him a mangled corpse at the bottom. The physical laws of God do not stay their action on account of the men who break them, but push on to their purposed end, let the results be what they may. Take another case. It is a law of nature that filthiness shall beget disease. Over yonder a number of persons herd together in impure air. They never cleanse their bodies, or wash their clothes. They leave heaps of filth to rot outside the door. Drainage is neglected. Water is scant and poisonous. The Sanitary Commissioner warns them—“My dear good people, if you do not alter this, you will have the fever or the cholera.”

“What? Do you believe,” says a woman, “that God Almighty is so cruel that He will take away this dear little child from my bosom just because we do not happen to wash ourselves, but prefer to live in dirt and drunkenness?” “Yes,” says the Sanitary Commissioner, “whatever you may think of it, that is the fact. Filth and vice will bring disease” “Well,” says some babbling freethinker, “it is a very shocking doctrine! You slander God! I do not believe it!” Yet the Lord did permit the plague a few weeks ago, right and left, to slay its thousands. Who says it is a cruel decree that foul air should make men sick? Nobody complains of the cruelty of God in His *physical* laws, although if men set themselves against them there is no sort of pity for them! The physical law goes on and stamps out all rebels against its power.

Go to sea in a leaky ship and see if when the storm comes the sea does not swallow you up without an atom of pity! Or stand under a tree when lightning is abroad, and if the lightning strike that tree and you are under it, see if the lightning will care for you. You have violated the *physical* law—you may have done it ignorantly—but it has no pity! It just smites with all its force. Now I say if this is a fact which nobody can dispute, that the God of Nature is a terrible God, oh you that worship the God of Nature and say you do not care for the God of Revelation, I ask you what you make out of all this? I ask you whether even Nature itself does not say to you, “If God so terribly avenges His ordinary physical laws when they are broken, how much more surely will He avenge His *moral* laws when men wantonly and wickedly throw themselves in their way”?

Again, we are not left to this argument alone, for there is one out of the Ten Commandments to which I can only allude which involves more especially the bodies of men. Now, when a man offends against the one Command, we shall see if God does really punish sin. We shall see in the man’s body whether or not sin does produce gall or wormwood. I allude, of course, to the command, “You shall not commit adultery,” which forbids all classes of lasciviousness and uncleanness. No sooner is this Law broken in any case than straightway man receives the recompense which is meet. The men or women who violate this precept soon find that they have not only done wrong to God but wrong to themselves.

Our hospitals and asylums could tell you into what a fearful state men have brought themselves by sins of the flesh. States of body and mind so terrible that the very phrases in which Scripture speaks of future misery might, without exaggeration, be used in describing them! This is rather the physician’s business than mine, but if this were the fit place and the fit time I could prove it—so that your very hair might stand on end. God forbid that any of you should prove in yourselves the misery which this sin brings even on earth!

Now, if the violation of this one Command which happens to touch the body, does, beyond all doubt, make men smart for it. If this one set of sins makes him feel that sin is as poison to the blood and the bones. If such is the case with *one* Commandment, why not with the rest? And as the other Commands, for the most part, do not seem to bring upon us a punishment *here*, it is rational to believe that they will bring it upon us in the next state. And as *this* is a state in which the body evidently suffers from the breach of *one* Command, it is natural to expect that in the *next* state the body and soul will suffer for the breach of the other nine!

I believe that every sin creates disease in the soul. I believe that every sinful thought, and word, and deed poisons our spiritual nature. I believe that sin is to be dreaded not merely because God will smite us, but because sin itself will plague us. If a man cuts himself he expects to bleed.

And if a man sins he is wounding his soul—and his *soul* must bleed. If a man drinks poison, he must expect to have it lying in the system if it does not kill him outright. And if a man takes sin into his spirit it lies rankling within. This root will bear hemlock and gall, if not in this life, yet in the life to come.

Still further, to bring out this argument. We have no reason to believe that death will change the character of man at all. I have no reason to believe that my dying, if I am a sinner, will make a saint of me. I certainly can have no thought that if I die as a saint death will make a sinner of me! A man might as well believe the one as the other, and they are both irrational. Death says, “He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. He that is holy, let him be holy still.” Then, a man dying as a sinner, when he gets into the next world, what will he do? Why, he will sin as he did here—not in the same shape and way—but he will in some way go on sinning. He will die a sinner, rise a sinner, live a sinner, and *forever* live a sinner.

Now, if he forever lives as a sinner, he will continue to get worse and worse in sin, for we all know that it is the nature of sin to grow worse, and sin has a self-developing power within itself. If in the other life the man goes on sinning worse and worse, and even in *this* life we have many instances that sin brings misery, may we not rationally conclude from the Bible that increasing sin in the next life will bring forth increasing misery, which will be intolerable beyond all conception? I tremble as I see the drift of this line of thought! May you tremble, too, and fly to the Lord Jesus for pardon! Depend upon it, as long as a man goes on sinning the Law will necessitate that he shall be miserable. He is out of accord with the great moral forces, and he must as surely suffer as another man would do who perished in fighting with gravitation or any other physical law.

“Oh,” cries one, “that is not the doctrine we kick against! We speak against God’s *punishing* sin!” But what if this should be the way in which sin is punished? What if it is written, “Evil shall slay the wicked.” “You have destroyed yourself.” If this is the way in which God punishes sin, even you that sin are compelled to say that it is right. Did anybody ever think it wrong that if a man tried to float upon a stone he should drown? Everybody says, “Why does the fool attempt it? It is a law of Nature that the stone should sink! Why does he kick against it?” Nobody thinks it cruel that he should drown if he ties a millstone to his neck and leaps into the sea. If a man thrusts his hand in the fire, nobody thinks it cruel on God’s part if that man’s hand is burned.

The natural effect of the violation of a Divine command is *misery*. Oh that men would believe it, and cast out the root which produces wormwood! But we are not, happily, left to *our* reason about it. We can turn to the Book of God, and call up the witnesses. Ask Noah, as he looks out of his ark, “Does sin bring bitterness?” And he points to the floating

carcasses of innumerable thousands that died because of sin. Turn to Abraham. Does sin bear bitterness? He points to the smoke of Sodom and Gomorrah that God destroyed because of their wickedness. Ask Moses, and he reminds you of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, who were swallowed up alive. Turn to Paul, and you do not find Paul speaking with the honeyed phrases of these modern deceivers who would make people believe that sin will not be punished!

He says, "He that despised Moses' Law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy who has trod underfoot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of Grace?" Listen to James or Jude, or Peter, and you hear them speak of chains of darkness and flaming fire. Hear John as he writes of the wrath of God and of the winepress of it, out of which the blood flows up to the horse's bridles! Let the Savior Himself speak to you. He cries, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." He is the author of those words, "Where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched."

It is He who speaks of the outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth! This Book is as opposite as light to darkness to the mawkish softness of modern heretical divinity which drivels against the just judgment of God! It tells you, (and oh that you might hear it as God's own voice to you!)—it tells you not that sin will end in pleasure and joy, but that the wrath of God will abide upon you if you do not turn from sin! It tells you that the soul that sins, it shall die. That God's curse is upon the wicked, and that everlasting punishment is the portion of the impenitent. Dreadful as that Truth of God is, it is clearly revealed, and let it be received and trembled at!

Once again, whereas right reason shows it and Scripture confirms it, I believe that conscience in every enlightened man asserts it. I read the other day, in a lecture against this doctrine, that Augustine was the author of the doctrine of eternal punishment. It was a great piece of news, certainly! But we are further told that it was because he had been a great sinner, and therefore he felt such horror of conscience on account of sin that his mind was morbid and he fancied that he *deserved* eternal punishment. Well, then, here I stand in the same position as Augustine! Having been a great sinner, too, and because of my great conviction of sin I also feel that sin deserves eternal punishment!

And, dear Friends, I do not believe the witness of Augustine is at all weakened by his having had a clear sense of sin! On the contrary, I accept him as all the better witness because, having known what sin meant and having felt its weight in his own conscience, he was better able to judge what sin deserved! It is strange that men should assert that because the

man felt a great horror of sin, therefore he misjudged its desert. That would be the very reason why he *should* judge correctly! And if the gentlemen who oppose this doctrine had any true sense of sin themselves, they would soon change their present views.

When my heart was awakened to feel the guilt of sin, I never quarreled with God upon the matter of punishment. I felt, "Let God do what He will with me on account of sin, I deserve it all." I was compelled to bow my head and not so much as lift my eyes to the place where He dwelt. I could but simply say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." I had no demurrer to plead in court against the Divine sentence. I assented to it. But if there is a man before me who says that the wrath of God is too heavy a punishment for his little sin, I ask him, if the sin is little, why does he not give it up? If it is such a little pleasure to you, why not renounce it?

A gentleman, a man of wealth who is now dead, as I one day walked with him in his garden, took me by the button-hole and said, "What an awful thing, Sir, that I should fling my soul away for the sake of a little worldly mirth when I know that I shall have to smart in Hell for it forever!" He looked me through and through as he spoke to me, but after we had prayed together, and I had laid before him the way of salvation, I was pained to see that he had made his choice for the pleasures of sin. When a man deliberately does that, what can you say but that he must take his choice? If you know that Hell is so dreadful, and you pretend that your sin is so little, why do you choose your sin? Why do you not renounce it?

I will take you on your own footing. You say the punishment is too severe for so small a pleasure. Then why do you take the pleasure? The more terrible the punishment is, the more foolish is it on your part to run the risk of it for the sake of such a paltry gain. Sinner, I charge you by the terrors of Hell—do not buy sin at such a fearful price—but rather say, "I cannot sell my soul so cheaply. I must have something better than the gaiety of life to reward me for being cast away forever." I put it yet again. The plan of salvation by Jesus Christ is very clear and very plain. It is, "Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Oftentimes our hearers say, "Oh it is so easy, so very simple—nothing to do but just trust in Christ."

My dear Hearer, if it is so simple, why not receive it?—

***"How they deserve the deepest Hell
That slight these joys above!
What chains of vengeance must they feel
That break these bonds of love!"***

If to trust in Christ is so simple, how can you refuse to believe in Him? Why will you live an unbeliever when God Himself has said, "He that believes not shall be *damned*"? Oh, fly from unbelief, which is the root that bears gall and wormwood!

II. I must be very brief on the other two heads. IS THERE SUCH A ROOT AS THIS GROWING IN THE HEART OF ANY ONE OF US HERE? I am afraid there is, because upon looking at the text it appears that some have this root that will bear gall and wormwood in them who are not actually gross outward sinners. They are described as those who *forget* God. The verse from which the text is taken says of them, “whose heart turns away this day from the Lord our God.”

Is there no heart here that is turned away from God? Very personally do I put this question to you all. Are you all followers of God? If your heart does not love God, the non-loving of God is that root which will bear for you the anguish of Hell. The non-loving of the Most High, even though you never curse or swear, even though you do not break the Sabbath is that root that will bear gall and wormwood. Next we read of “men seeking after another God.” Are you loving someone better than God? Are you living for *money*—is that your great object? Are you seeking *fame*? Whatever it is to which you give your whole life, *that is your god*.

Is there no one here who is living for self? If so, though you may be outwardly a most respectable people, if you are living for anything but God, that root will bring forth gall and wormwood. Ah, my dear Hearers, I feel as if my eyes would burst into weeping while I am talking to you! My head aches, my heart is burning as I think how many there are of you who are in this state! You are living for that which will bring forth to you the wrath to come. Do think of this? If I tell you what is not true reject it, but as God, my Master, has put it into my heart to speak it to you, take warning!

Again, this root is in every man who disbelieves the penalty of sin. The verse following the text speaks of one who said, “I shall have peace though I walk after my own heart.” Are you saying that? If so, you have the evil root in your heart. There is no more sure sign of reprobation than callousness and carelessness! And if you are saying this morning, “Well, I will try it. I will have the pleasures of sin and will run all risks,” then you are the man. I do not say that the root has blossomed yet, but you have it within, and as surely as God’s Word is true, if you die in such a state, you shall forever know that this root produces nothing but gall and wormwood!

III. The last point was to be, HOW ARE WE TO GET RID OF IT? Is there a possibility of being delivered from the gall and wormwood? There is. As many as trust in Christ shall be rid of the gall and wormwood. How? Shall it be poured on the ground so that you shall not drink it? No, it must be drunk! All the bitter results of sin must be endured. Sin produces Hell, and that Hell must be suffered!

But listen, *Christ* has drunk the gall and wormwood for every soul that trusts Him! He has drunk the gall and wormwood for you, if you trust Him

now! Come and rest upon my Master and you shall find that there is not a drop of gall nor wormwood left for you—for in the garden and on the bloody tree Christ endured what you ought to have endured—He felt the full results of sin in His own Person which otherwise you must have felt. “Well,” you say, “thank God for that! But how can I cut up the root itself?”

In order to escape the punishment of sin you must be saved from sin itself, and the way to it is this—you must deeply feel in your own soul that sin is a bitter thing. If you do not feel and acknowledge this you will never find mercy. My dear Hearer, if sin is a sweet morsel in your mouth, it will be bitter in your heart forever! And as long as you love sin you cannot love God. You must go to God and pray, “Lord, tear these sins out of me—do not leave one—neither a little or a great one.” Mark me, you may talk what you will about believing in Christ, but if you love sin you will suffer for sin! Now, lay bare your heart before the Eternal One, and say, “O God, You see my sins, You see the evil I did love, I hate it now, Lord, help me to overcome it! Let me not be the victim of my sins—

***‘The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol is,
Help me to tear it from Your throne,
And worship only You.’***

“As for the past, wash me in the blood of Your dear Son. As for the present, send Your Spirit down to write Your Law upon my heart.”

I did want, this morning, to have pleaded with sinners. I had it in my heart to have put before you the blessing and the curse, and then to have said, “By God’s Grace lay hold on eternal life, and let your sins go! Trust Jesus, and let the pleasures of the world go.” But if I cannot plead with you, I will ask God the Holy Spirit to plead with your consciences afterwards. Sin cannot bring you pleasure. Man, it cannot profit you in the long run. You may get a little money or pleasure now, but you will lose by it in the long run of eternity! If your existence were only on earth, I believe your happiness would be greatest by being a Christian—but this world is only the first step or two in a race that never has an end.

May God the Holy Spirit influence your will that you may choose that which will endure, and not that which will be buried in the tomb! Oh by the frail character of life, by the certainty of death, by the judgment of God, by His hatred of sin, by the flames that know no abatement though briny tears forever flow, fly away to Christ! Oh may you fly to Him now and find life in His death, healing in His wounds, and everlasting mercy through His merits!

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MEN WITHOUT HEART, SIGHT, OR HEARING

NO. 1638

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 8, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*Yet the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive
and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this day.”
Deuteronomy 29:4.*

FEELING, sight, hearing. What wonderful things these are! If we could exist without them, what a wretched condition ours would be. The outer world would be unknown to us if the gates of the senses were shut. And the soul would be famished, like Samaria when it was shut up and there was no going in nor coming out. Take away from us the power of perception by touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing—and it would be of small account to us that the world was beautiful—for to our consciousness there would scarcely be a world at all. All the colors of the rainbow, the warmth of the sun, the freshness of the breeze, the sweetness of honey, the charms of music and even the terrors of storms would cease! And the soul would be shut up within the body as within a prison which had neither doors nor windows. The dreariest dungeon of the Bastille would be liberty compared with such a state!

Perhaps the mind would exist, but certainly it could not live. It would be a misuse of language to call it life. When any one of the senses is gone, it involves great deprivation and subjects the person enduring it to the pity of his fellows. But if *all* were absent, what wretchedness must ensue! Loss of sight or hearing creates among us a large number of sufferers who deserve our sympathy, but what mourning would suffice for those, if there were, indeed, any such, who physically had neither heart to perceive, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear?

Transfer your thoughts, now, from these external senses by which we become conscious of the external world to those *spiritual* senses by which we perceive the spiritual world, the Kingdom of Heaven, the Lord of that Kingdom and all the powers of the world to come. There is a heart which should be tender, by which we perceive the Presence of God and feel His operations and even behold the Lord, Himself, as it is written, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” There is a spiritual *eye* by which the things invisible are discerned! Blessed are they to whom the Lord has given to see the things of His Kingdom, which to the unrenewed remain hidden in parables! There is a spiritual *ear* by which we hear the gentle whispers of the Spirit which frequently come to us internally, without the medium of sounds that can affect the ears. Blessed are those who have the ear which the Lord has purged, cleansed and opened so that it listens to the Divine call!

But there is no blessedness in the case of men devoid of spiritual feeling, sight and hearing. Theirs is a miserable plight! Just what the blind

man, the deaf man and the man who is destitute of feeling would be in the outer world—that is what many men are as to the spiritual world. Alas, there are among us, in this congregation this day, and all around us in myriads, poor souls of whom this text is true, “The Lord has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this day.” This is a very, very mournful case. But perhaps the most lamentable aspect of it is that the persons who are thus devoid of the spiritual senses, by which they can converse with the best and highest world, are not conscious of their incapacity, or, if partially conscious of it, seem to be stupidly contented to remain as they are!

The naturally blind man would see if he could! What shall I say of those whose inability to see spiritually is willful and lies more in their will than anywhere else? The man who cannot hear the voice of his fellow would greatly rejoice if the gates of sound once opened to him. But there are none so deaf as those who *will not* hear—whose deafness is *moral*—whose inability to hear the voice of God lies in this fact that they *deliberately* close their ears to the voice of holy exhortation. They are ready enough to listen to the siren songs of temptation. And they bend a willing ear to the subtle deceit of the serpent, but they will not regard the tender, loving wisdom of the Good Shepherd! They are quick of hearing to evil, but deaf to good!

This is the sad part of it—they are blind and do not *want* to see! They are deaf and do not wish to hear! Our poet says—

**“How helpless guilty nature lies,
Unconscious of its load.”**

In this unconsciousness lies the heart of the mischief. Helpless man is unconscious of his own helplessness! Because they say, “We see,” therefore their sin remains. If they were blind and knew it, it were another matter, and signs of hope would be visible. But to be blind and yet to boast of having superior sight—and to ridicule those who see—is the lamentable condition of not a few! They will not thank us for our pity, but much they need it. Eyes have they, but they see not and yet they glory in their blindness! Multitudes around us are in this plight.

When the Prophet says, “Bring forth the blind people that have eyes,” we can only wonder where we should put them all if they were willing to assemble in one place! My own spirit feels very heavy in having to preach upon this subject this morning, but I wish to do so with great tenderness of heart, lamenting while I blame. It seems to me that Moses felt very tenderly to the people whom he here addresses. He puts his meaning in the gentlest conceivable shape when he says, “The Lord has not given you an heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this day.” He does not excuse, but yet he softly chides. He speaks not with the stern severity of Isaiah when he cried in the name of the Lord, “Go and tell this people, Hear you, indeed, but understand not; and see you, indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.”

What a sad thing it is that so many are rich in all things except the one thing necessary. God has given them abundance of earthly possessions, but He has not given them eyes to see His bounty, nor ears to hear His

voice of love, nor a heart to perceive His Presence in the mercies which they enjoy. Such see the harvest, but not the Great Farmer! They enjoy the fruitful seasons, but take no delight in the Giver of the rain and the Sender of the sunshine! What a sad condition to be in! Alas, poor rich man! He has so much and yet so little! And what a lamentable sight is the educated man of this world who is learned in all the lore of the ancients and versed in all the science of the moderns! He, who has pried into the secret chambers of knowledge and has observed the skill of the Eternal in the starry heavens and in microscopic life—and yet, with all his attainments, has no knowledge of his Maker—and will not accept the evidence of His Presence!

How sad that we should have to say to such, “Yes, you know all the facts, and yet cannot see beneath their surface. You allow prejudice to blind your eyes to the plain teaching of Creation and Providence. You walk through the studio and admire the pictures—and deny the artist’s existence! Whereas, if you were candid, you would believe in him from his works and then go on to spell out his character from them. Alas, you have not a heart to perceive, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear to this day.” Well spoke the Apostle when he said, “Not many great men after the flesh, not many learned are called.” Often, those that know the most of the secular know the least of the sacred. Eyes that seem as if they could pierce through rocks and read the mysteries of primeval night, turn out to be mere sightless eyeballs as to Divine things.

Yet they know it not, neither guess at their folly. How sad it is that there should be so many who are quick in reasoning and ready in invention, who cannot see that the visible argues an invisible Creator—and that Providential arrangements prove that a Great Father is over all. As Herbert says, they, “walk with their staff to Heaven.” They thread the stars like beads upon a string. They harness the lightning and weigh the starry orbs. And yet they have not discovered their God, who is above, around, outside and within them! They are open-eyed to all things but unto Him who fills all in all! I fear I must apply to them the language of Paul, “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.”

This morning I shall speak, as I shall be helped by the Holy Spirit, first upon a very mournful fact. Secondly, upon a yet more mournful reason for that fact. And thirdly, upon a mournful result which comes out of that fact. May what is said be taken as a word of warning and may God, the Holy Spirit bless it to the conversion of everyone here present who remains as yet unrenewed! I say *everyone*, for there is not one among you whom I would knowingly exempt from my prayers.

I. First, we shall think upon A MOURNFUL FACT. Here was a whole nation, with but very few exceptions, of whom their leader, who knew them best and loved them best, was obliged to say, “The Lord has not given you a heart to perceive to this day.” The mournful part of it was that this was the nation that had been specially favored of God above all others. God had not entered into covenant with Edom or with Moab. He had not sent the light of His Truth to Egypt, or to Ethiopia, nor to any other of the na-

tions of antiquity. But this comparatively little and insignificant people had been selected that to it might be committed the oracles of God! They were the one candlestick of the human race! They had light in their dwellings while all around them brooded a darkness which might be felt.

By His name, Jehovah the Lord was made known to them when He spoke to Moses in the desert and manifested Himself to him in the burning bush. "He made known His ways to Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel." He gave to this people Revelation after Revelation, containing guidance, rule, comfort and instruction, even as it is written, "He has not dealt so with any people." Almost all the Light of God then given was focused upon Israel and yet they had not eyes to see! "God speaks once, yes, twice, yet man perceives it not for need of ears which can hear." Is not this a dreadful thing? I can understand the other nations being blind and senseless, for they were in the dark and, "the times of their ignorance God winked at," but for this nation, upon whom the Sun of Righteousness had risen—to choose darkness and abhor the Light is a horrible thing! By the preciousness of the *privilege*, the sin of its *rejection* was greatly enhanced.

This is sad, sad to the utmost degree of sadness, but is it not the case with some of you? Are there not among you those who have the clearest Light of God and yet choose the ways of darkness? My dear Hearers, be honest with yourselves and answer! Born of godly parents; singled out to be carefully instructed in the things of God; attending a faithful ministry from your youth up; reading your Bible and being thoroughly versed in its contents and yet, for all that, without godly feeling and gracious perception! I grieve that you should have such privileges and yet remain strangers to salvation! Will it be so forever? Shall it always be said of you, "The Lord has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this day"?

Note again, that not only were they a highly favored people, but they had seen very wonderful acts performed by the Lord Himself. Moses says, "You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land, the great temptations which your eyes have seen, the signs and those great miracles." Does it not seem deplorable that they could see God lifting His hand against Pharaoh with plague after plague and yet not acknowledge Him to be the only living and true God? Those plagues smote the gods of Egypt—how could Israel ever turn aside to worship such dishonored deities? Each plague was aimed against some sacred object of Egyptian worship and the marvel is that these defeated idols should still be worshipped by Israel!

Truly the Lord spoke with a loud voice from Heaven—with a voice which even Pharaoh was compelled to hear—and yet His own people heard Him not! They saw the plagues and did not discern the Glory of their God so as to remain faithful to Him. And that Red Sea! Was not that marvel enough? How often have I wished that I could have been there to see the eager waters leap on Pharaoh and all his hosts! What joy to have heard the sound of the timbrel and to have seen the twinkling feet of the maidens as they danced and chanted, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider He has cast into the sea."

Could men stand there and see that and yet not perceive that the gods of the heathen are *idols*—and that only Jehovah is the living and true God? And could they shake off the fear and dread of this mighty God from their souls and turn to worship a golden calf which their own hands had made? Yes, such is the deplorable wickedness of man that if God were to work, over again, all the miracles of Egypt in the sight of those of you who are unbelievers, you would not be converted to His fear! You would be staggered by the wonder, but you would not be converted by the witness! Something else is needed over and above all miracles before the blinded eye will care to see, or the hardened heart will begin to feel! You, also, have witnessed great deeds of Grace in our midst, and yet you are not convinced. You even believe in all the miracles of Scripture and in the death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus—and yet you do not trust Him! Ah me, what can I say? What can I do but mourn over you?

In addition to this, these people had passed through a very remarkable experience. They had been brought out of Egypt by miracle and, by the same power, they had passed through the depths of the sea as on dry land! Moses thus describes their wilderness history—“And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and your shoe is not waxen old upon your foot. You have not eaten bread, neither have you drunk wine or strong drink: that you might know that I am the Lord your God.” All these 40 years they lived by miracles—and yet they neither feared, nor loved, nor trusted Jehovah their God who worked all these signs among them! As a nation they did not receive the spiritual teaching which the Lord set before them.

Do you blame them? Look at your home. Are they the only people who have thus offended? May I not be addressing some, today, whose experience has been singularly full of mercy and love? God has been strangely gracious to you, my Friend. He has led you by a way that you knew not and, if you could but see it, His hand has been conspicuously with you from the time when you left your father’s house unto this day! I know not to whom I may be speaking, but I am persuaded that there are some here whose career has been especially marked by the Providence of God. Yours has been no common journey of life. You have been preserved in accident and restored from sickness. The stars in their courses have seemed to fight for you—and the stones of the field have joined to defend you—and yet you do not observe the hand of the Lord in all this!

The Lord has girded you though you have not known Him! He has guided you, restrained you, delivered you, instructed you even though you have not deigned to think of Him. Yes, He has saved you from the consequences of your own folly, or you would long before this have been a beggar, or a mass of sores, or a prisoner in the most dreaded dungeon! He has interposed to save you from your own folly! And here you are where mercy pleads and Grace holds out her silver scepter. Alas, even to this day you have not a heart to perceive the long-suffering of God, nor eyes to see your obligations, nor ears to hear the wooing of His love—you are still going on in rebellion against God. Shall it always be so? It is grievous that it has been thus so long. Is there no turning? Is there no relenting? Must you die in your sins?

In addition to all this sight and experience, the Israelites had received remarkable instruction. In the wilderness, the Lord taught them by Moses and Aaron. The Tabernacle was pitched in their midst, according to the pattern which Moses had seen on the mountain, and there a worship was instituted, every part of which was singularly rich in instruction, as we all know to this day. There was not a lamb slaughtered, nor a lamp kindled, nor a handful of incense burned on the altar, nor a curtain folded up, nor a silver socket set in its place without some moral and spiritual significance. Had they desired to learn it, they might have discovered in the Tabernacle in the wilderness great stores of teachings as to those things which make for the peace and salvation of men—but they had no heart to perceive, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear—and so the whole apparatus of teaching was lost upon them.

Ah, dear Hearers, you may enjoy the most clear instruction; you may have line upon line, precept upon precept; you may read God's Book, itself, and you may observe the experience of Christians—and you may have all their love and affection to help you to understand the things of God—and yet for all that you may remain without spiritual perception! All the external processes of holy teaching may spend themselves in vain upon you for 40, 50, 60, or even 70 years and you may still remain blind and unfeeling! You may know the letter of doctrine and yet never perceive its meaning. You may see the logical nature and certainty of a sacred Truth of God and yet never see its bearings upon yourself. Does your present condition prove this assertion? Are you, also without understanding? Are you still untaught in the things of God? O that the Holy Spirit may now create in you a new heart and bestow both spiritual eyes and ears upon you!

One thing else is worth notice. These people had been associated with remarkable characters. They were not all blinded—there were a few among them who were gracious and so were made to perceive. Caleb and Joshua were there, and Aaron and Miriam, but chiefly there was Moses, grandest of men, true father of the nation! It was something to have lived in a camp where you could speak with such a man as Moses, who had seen God, face to face, so that upon his brow there rested the glow of Deity when he came down from the mountain! You, too, my Friends, have met with those whose conversation has been in Heaven and whose lives are bright with communion with the Lord!

If we do not see and will not see where another sees so clearly, we stand condemned! A man who considers himself highly intelligent stands with me upon the hill. He looks out upon a fair landscape over which hangs a wonderful sky bedecked with fleecy clouds. At our feet blooms a wealth of lovely flowers. He tells me that in all this he sees no evidence of God. Is he blind? As for me, I feel myself surrounded by the all-embracing Deity and His Presence is the greatest fact of my consciousness—

***“God has a Presence and that you may see
In the fold of the flower, the leaf of the tree;
In the sun of the noon, the star of the night;
In the storm cloud of darkness, the rainbow of light;
In the waves of the ocean, the furrows of land;
In the mountains of granite, the atom of sand!”***

***Turn where you may, from the sky to the sod,
Where can you gaze that you see not God?"***

Now, either I am a liar or else my neighbor is sadly dull of perception! And as I know that I speak the truth, I know, also, that he is blind! If Moses saw, he, by that fact, left the rest of the people without excuse!

That they would *not* perceive was exceedingly provoking to the Lord, for among them God was manifest in the most remarkable manner. The Lord came from Sinai and the Holy One from Paran. From the top of the smoking mountain He spoke with voice of trumpet and with sound of thunder—the earth shook and trembled beneath His feet! The Lord was among them conspicuously in the flaming pillar by night and in the shadowing cloud by day. Israel saw the Glory of her God! She could not help seeing it and yet the people refused to behold Him and asked, “Is the Lord among us or not?” Moses said of them, “They are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!” Even to the very end of 40 years of patient instruction they remained without the true knowledge of God!

Ah me! This is sad, most sad! But I fear that in this congregation we have a number who are like they are. Years have not brought them Grace, nor has a lifetime yielded them wisdom! They have seen God’s wonders of Grace upon their friends and relatives. They have also tasted of the Lord’s goodness in their own lives—and they have heard His voice in the preaching of the Gospel, for Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth as crucified among them—and yet they have not seen the Lord and do not hear Him even to this day! This is no new thing, but it is, none the less, a grief of heart to those of us who fear the Lord and feel a love for souls.

Brothers and Sisters, remember that these Jews, in subsequent generations, had great Prophets among them and what was the success of their labor? Did they not cry, “Who has believed our report?” At length they saw the Son of God among them and how did He fare? Jesus Himself, with all His miracles of Grace and words of love, came unto His own people and they received Him not, but cried, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” How true it is that nothing can bless men till almighty Grace renews them! If one should rise from the dead, men would not repent unless they were renewed! There is no miracle that God can do; there is no marvel that Omnipotence, itself, can perform which can make men, who have no spiritual eyes, see! Nothing can make men feel so long as their hearts remain hardened against the Most High. “The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Verily is it written with truth, “You must be born again.” The unbelief of man, so long as it remains, renders blessing impossible. The Gospels represent our Lord Himself as baffled by man’s refusal to believe, as it is written, “He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” Oh the wretchedness of this state of things! Who shall deliver men from it? Who can attempt the task but God alone?

II. We will now hasten to spend a few minutes in descending into a still lower depth. Let us note THE MOURNFUL REASONS FOR ALL THIS. The reasons for their incapacity to see and perceive lay, first, in the fact that

these people never believed in their own blindness. They had no heart to perceive and they did not perceive their absence of perception—they had no eyes with which to detect their own dimness of vision! They were such fools as to dote on their own wisdom! They were so poor as to think themselves rich, so hypocritical as to profess to be sincere! They thought they knew better than their God and so they sat in judgment upon His Providence and styled the provision of His wisdom. They were so quick of perception that when Moses was gone away for a little while, they said, “Make us gods, which shall go before us; as for this Moses, we know not what has become of him.”

They showed their pretended wisdom by suspecting both the Lord and His servant Moses as soon as they fell into any difficulty. “Because there were no graves in Egypt, therefore has He brought us forth that we may die in the wilderness?” They would snatch from Jehovah’s hand the rod of government and become leaders for themselves! Jeshurun forsook God that made him and lightly esteemed the Rock of His salvation. They were wise in their own conceits and, therefore it was that they could not see. Pride is the great creator of darkness, like Nahash, the Ammonite, it puts out the right eye! Men seek not the Light of God because they boast that they are the children of the day and need no light from above!

More than this, these men never asked for a heart to perceive, eyes to see and ears to hear. No man has ever asked for these things and been refused—no soul has cried in its blindness and darkness, “Open my eyes,” but what a gracious answer has always come! It is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus to open the blind eyes, but this He is always ready to do whenever men call upon His name. Let but the poor man cry and the Lord Jesus must and will hear him and pour the daylight into his soul. In Israel’s case there was a distinct refusal to be blest—“But My people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would have none of Me.”

There was no prayer for the heavenly blessing, but an aversion to it. “You have not, because you ask not.” “They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness.” Rightly are those left in darkness who will not ask God to give them light, or to open their eyes! Is not this the case with some of you? O my Hearers, I must be plain and personal with you—is it not true that some of you are prayerless, Christless, graceless? What will become of you? Your case is all the more to be lamented because you are without excuse! Then, moreover, what little light they did have, they resisted. When they were forced to see, it was only for a moment that they would be instructed—and then they shut their eyes, again. “When He slew them, then they sought Him: and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their Rock and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter Him with their mouth and they lied to Him with their tongues.”

When He sent fiery serpents among them, or otherwise smote them, *then* they perceived His Presence for a while, but soon they turned back and dealt deceitfully. They took up the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of their God, Remphan, and worshipped engraved images in secret in their tents so that they provoked the Lord to jealousy. And He was incensed against them. They loved darkness rather than light because their deeds

were evil! They did not actually cry like Pharaoh, “Who is Jehovah that I should obey His voice?” but in their *hearts* they meant it. They lusted after the abominable rites of Baalpeor and fell into filthiness in the days of Balaam, although God, Himself, dwelt among them in all His matchless purity and holiness!

Now, this is the gravest crime of all—to leave the holy God for impure idolatries! Oh sinners that love not God, is it not because you love that which is evil? Oh, you that never see Him or seek after Him, is not the cause of your blindness to be found in your love of sin? “He that does evil hates the light.” This willfulness of yours; this desperate bent of your hearts towards evil—how will you answer for it? Our fear for you is great—we are afraid that you will perish through your hardness of heart! Oh that you had a desire towards God! Oh that you willed to turn to Jesus! Oh that His Grace would cure you of your stiff-necked rebellion! Jesus stands here this morning and He cries, “How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not.” He waits to be gracious! Do you doubt this?

He has given you all manner of good things. Do you think He would have refused you eyes to see and a heart to feel if these had been sought? “He gives liberally and upbraids not.” If we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more will our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? But no—men choose their own delusions! They abide in their darling sins! They perish by suicide! Like Saul, every unbeliever falls upon his own sword. “Israel, you have destroyed yourself.” Yet you delight in your destruction and you enter into league with that which devours you. You are a prisoner, but you hug your chains! You see not, for you willfully blow out the candle! You hear not, for you cover your own ears—you are spiritually dead—but you have chosen corruption!

By prejudice, pride and hardness of heart you have shut out yourself from love. Ah me, that such folly as this should be continued by any who frequent this house of prayer! Can it be possible that you are so foolish? Blessed be the Lord, many of you have eyes to see and ears to hear! Let all such adore the Sovereign Grace which has given these gifts to them. Let them worship the love which has sweetly conquered their stubborn will, leading their captivity captive, and giving them to feel and know and taste of spiritual things! Not to you be the glory, but to the Lord alone! To those who know not the Lord, there is shame and confusion. But to those who have known Him, there is no self-glorification, for, as the wise man says, “The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord has made even both of them.” To be blind of heart is our sin—but to be made to see is the gift of Grace! Our misery is our own work, but our salvation is of the Lord!

III. I conclude by noticing what was THE MOURNFUL RESULT of these people being so highly favored and privileged and yet not seeing nor discerning their God. The result was, first, that they missed a happy portion. I can hardly imagine how happy the children of Israel might have been. They left Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm. Their ears were hung with jewels and their purses were filled with riches, while around them manna dropped from Heaven and cool streams flowed at

their side! They might have made a quick march to the promised land and at once entered their rest, for their God who had sent the hornet before them would soon have driven out their adversaries! “How should one have chased a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight.”

In the land of promise they would have dwelt securely and God would have given them rest. Then would the heavens have heard the earth and the earth would have yielded such harvests that one year in seven they would have had no need either to sow or reap, but would have spent their whole time in praising God! And then a jubilee would have come every seventh year, in which, with high-sounding cymbals they would magnify the Most High! They would have known no invading enemy and felt neither blast, nor blight, nor mildew! In fact, they would have been the happiest nation under Heaven—“He should have fed them, also, with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied you.”

They flung all this to the side—*they would not have God*—and so they could not have prosperity. They walked contrary to Him and He walked contrary to them. They would not obey Him and, therefore, His anger smoked against them. Think, moreover, what a glorious destiny they threw aside. Had they been equal to the occasion, by God’s Grace they might have been a nation of kings and priests! They might have been the Lord’s missionaries to all lands; the light-bearers to all peoples! Every arrangement was made to enable them to live a godly, holy, joyous, sanctified life. They ate angels’ food and they might have lived angels’ lives, acting as heralds, to tell others what wonders God had worked for them.

Alas, they could not see the moral grandeur of so high a calling and they thought more of eating flesh than of honoring the Lord and teaching His Law. I would like to say to some of you that God has been setting before you an open door and yet you have not perceived Him, nor loved Him. He would make saints of you and you are content to be money-grubbers. You have judged yourselves unworthy of the prize which He has set before you! You do not know what a happy lot you have declined. Just lately you were a young man—you are getting to middle life now—and you do not know what golden opportunities you have wasted! As Cleopatra melted pearls and swallowed them as a drink, so have you drunk down the possibilities of Glory as if they were common things! What might not God have done with some of you if your hearts had been given to Him years ago! By this time you might have achieved a lifework glorious to God, honorable to yourself and happy to your friends.

The stuff is in you which might have been molded into a minister, a missionary, a soul-winner—and you might have been among the happiest and best of men! Nor does the waste end with yourself! You are causing damage to many others. Your children are growing up to follow your follies, wasting their lives as you have squandered yours. Oh, had you yielded to Jesus years ago your sons might have been your honor and comfort—and your daughters your joy and delight! You have flung away such opportunities as could not be bought for gold! Thus says the Lord, “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. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto Him: but their time should have endured forever." Happy are God's people, but wretched are they who, being placed where they could see God's hand, yet will not see it—placed where they could hear God's voice, yet will not hear it, but refuse the Kingdom of Heaven which has come so near unto them.

Another result was that while they missed so high a position, they went on sinning. As they did not learn the lesson God was teaching them, namely, that He was God and that to serve Him was their joy and their prosperity, they went from one evil to another, provoking the Lord to jealousy. From repining and murmuring they went on to rebelling. "Let us make a captain," they said, "and let us return to Egypt." From being idolatrous they became lascivious and fell into the sin of uncleanness with the women of Moab. Often they were actual idolaters and always they were unstable of heart. So they went from one sin to another because they had not a heart to perceive, nor ears to hear their God. Therefore they frequently suffered.

A plague broke out one time and a fire at another. At one time they were visited with fever and another time the earth opened beneath them. One day the Amalekites smote them. Another day fiery serpents leaped up from the sand and they died by the thousands, being poisoned by their bites. They suffered much and often—and in all their trials they did but reap what they had sown. A man does not know what he is doing when he sins. We tell our naughty children that we have rods in pickle for them—and this is assuredly the case with the great Father who has chastisement laid up for the people who willfully revolt from Him! He brings forth sorrow and wrath for those who harden their hearts and continue in their iniquities. Ah, my Hearers, how many of you are, this day, reaping what your own hands have sown!

At last this evil ended terribly. The Lord lifted His hand to Heaven and swore that the rebellious generation should not enter into His rest—and they began to die by wholesale till Moses cried, "We are consumed by Your anger and by Your wrath are we troubled." Not one of the men that came out of Egypt, save only Joshua and Caleb, reached the promised land. Whenever they pitched their tents at eventide, the first thing was to celebrate the funerals of the day. The tribes marched on and on—at the end of the march they stumbled into their graves till the whole of that peninsula in which they had to wander up and down for 40 years became one vast cemetery where the thousands of Israel were buried! Who slew all these? Not by the sword of the enemy nor by the arrow of the foe were they destroyed—but *sin* laid them in heaps as in the day of battle.

They could not enter in because of their unbelief. The land that flowed with milk and honey lay smiling in the calm sunlight on the other side of Jordan, but they could not enter in because they had no heart to perceive, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear the Lord and His Word. And this is the main misery of *your* condition, O you careless ones, that you will not be able to enter into God's rest either here or hereafter! This is the misery of it to me—that I must set Christ before some of you and you will never have Him—that I must extol His atoning blood, but you will refuse to be

washed in it! That I must go on declaring my Lord's message as long as this tongue can move—bidding you believe in Jesus Christ and find eternal life—but still, of some of you I shall always have to say, "The Lord has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this day."

Alas, your eyes will be opened one day, in another sense. "The rich man saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom." Who was that? That was a Jew of the kind I have described who had everything in this life, being clothed in purple and faring sumptuously every day! But he had no heart to perceive nor eyes to see. "In Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." Oh, my Hearers, Hell's torments will open your eyes! Will you wait till then? O you ungodly ones, you will think, then! I pray God you may have sense enough to think *now*, while thinking will be of use to you. If there is a Heaven, seek it! If there is a Hell, escape it! If there is a God, love Him! If there is a Christ, trust Him! If there is sin, seek to be washed from it! If there is pardon, rest not till you have it! Oh do not mock your Savior! Do not make a game of eternal realities! Be in earnest about this and in earnest at once!

If you must play the fool, trifle with something less precious than your souls! Procure toys less expensive than your own immortal destinies! Oh, that God would bless this word to you careless ones, that you may feel at once that you do not feel as you should and begin to cry to God to give you feeling! Oh, that you may see that you do not see and begin to cry, "Lord, open my eyes!" Oh, that you may hear, this morning, a voice which shall make you feel that you do not hear as you ought to hear and, therefore, must always cry to God to give you hearing! Remember that spiritual life is only from God. It is His gift and it is not bestowed according to merit, but is given by pure Grace to the unworthy. Seek it, and you shall have it, for so it is written, "He that asks, receives; he that seeks, finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened."

Will your ears again refuse the language of His Grace? Will you still go to your farm and to your merchandise, to your labor and to your amusement, and reject the voice that calls you to Glory and immortality? Will you trample upon the bleeding love of Jesus? Oh, then, what shall I do and to whom shall I turn? I must go back to my Master, mourning with Isaiah, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Lord, reveal Your arm and then they will believe the report! Amen and Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Deuteronomy 29.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—917, 461, 100 (V. 2).**

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PLAIN GOSPEL FOR PLAIN PEOPLE

NO. 1967

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 12, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For this commandment which I command you this day, it is not hidden from you, neither is it far off. It is not in Heaven, that you should say, Who shall go up for us to Heaven and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, Who shall go over the sea for us and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the Word is very near unto you, in your mouth, and in your heart, that you may do it.”
Deuteronomy 30:11-14.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ, in John's Gospel, in the 46th verse of the fifth chapter, says, “Moses wrote of Me.” Hence we may safely interpret much that Moses said, not only of the Law, but also of the Gospel. Indeed, the Law itself was given primarily to drive men to the Gospel. It was meant to show them the impossibility of salvation by their own works and so to shut them up to a salvation which is available even for sinners. The types of sacrifice and purification pointed to the method of pardon for the guilty by faith and acceptance for sinners by a righteousness not their own. This is certainly one of the passages in which Moses wrote of the Savior yet to come.

We are not, however, left to conjecture this, for the Apostle Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has quoted this passage in the 10th chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. He has given us a sort of paraphrase of it, not quoting it with verbal exactness, but giving its *sense*—and then inserting his own interpretation of that sense—which interpretation, seeing that he spoke under the direct influence of the Spirit of God, may be accepted as decisive. The Spirit of God best knew what He meant by the Words which He spoke by Moses. Even if Moses, himself, may not altogether have meant the same, the Spirit's own meaning must stand. I believe, however, that Moses *did* intend that which Paul attributes to him and that he saw in the whole Revelation of God under the ancient dispensation, the spirit, the essential spirit of the Gospel which was more fully declared to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. In this instance he was not speaking of the Law as given upon Sinai, if we view it as a Covenant of Works. I showed you this by reading the first verse of the 29th chapter which is the preface to the passage now before us. There we read, “These are the words of the Covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, *beside the Covenant which He made with them in Horeb.*” We must understand Moses to be speaking, now, of God's way of salvation as it is set forth in the types, sacrifices and

ordinances of the Mosaic dispensation—which Paul calls, “the righteousness of faith.” Paul interprets him as speaking of the Gospel, itself, and using these remarkable words concerning salvation by Grace!

What is meant by these words is this—that the way of salvation is plain and clear—it is not concealed among the mysteries of Heaven. “It is not in Heaven, that you should say, Who shall go up for us to Heaven and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it?” Neither is it wrapped up among the profundities of deep, unrevealed secrecy. “Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, Who shall go over the sea for us and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it?” But the way of salvation is brought home to us, given to us in a handy form and laid within grasp of our understanding—it is spoken to us in human language and brought within the compass of human emotions! We can speak it with our mouths and enjoy it with our hearts. It is a household treasure, not a foreign rarity! It is not so remote from us that only they can know it who travel far to make discoveries. Neither is it so sublimely difficult that only they can grasp it who have soared to Heaven and ransacked the secrets of the Book sealed with seven seals. It is brought to our doors like the manna and flows at our feet like the water from the Rock. It is, as Moses says, “very near to us.” Yes, very near to each one who hears the Gospel, for Moses puts it in the singular—“It is very near unto *you*, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.”

I. And so I begin my discourse, this morning, with this first head—THE WAY OF SALVATION IS PLAIN AND SIMPLE. You have neither to look skyward nor seaward to find it—here it is before you—as near as your tongue, inseparable from you as your heart! You have neither to rise to the sublime, nor sink to the profound—it lies before you an open secret. As says Moses in the last verse of the previous chapter—“The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever.”

I think *we might have expected this if we consider the Nature of God* who has made this wonderful Revelation. When God speaks to a man with a view to his salvation, it is but natural that in His wisdom He should so speak as to be understood! It is not wisdom which leads teachers to become obscure—if they teach at all, they should adapt themselves to the disciple’s capacity. No doubt some men have obtained a reputation for wisdom because they have not been understood, but this was fictitious and unworthy of true men. If they had possessed the highest wisdom, they would have aimed at making matters clear when their objective was to instruct. As a general rule, when a speaker is not clear to his hearers it is because the thought is not clear to *himself*. This can never be supposed of Him who knows all things and sees all things as they are. The only wise God abounds to us in all wisdom and prudence in His manner of imparting to us the knowledge of His will! Teaching, He does teach and explaining, He does clearly explain. There may be and there is, a sinful dullness in the minds of sinful men, but there is no such obscurity in the Revelation, itself, as to excuse men for this blindness. God, who is infinitely wise, would not give to us a Revelation upon the vital point of salvation and then leave it so much in the dark that it was impossible for common

minds to comprehend it if they desired to do so! God adapts means to ends and does not allow men to miss Heaven from lack of plainness on His part!

We expect a plain and simple Revelation because God has made a Revelation perfectly adapted for its end, upon which no improvement can be made. You must have noticed that when an invention first comes before the public eye, it is almost always complicated. And the reason for this lies in the fact that it is, as yet, in its infancy. As the invention is improved, it is simplified. Almost every alteration in a piece of machinery which goes towards its perfecting—goes, also, towards making it more simple and, at the last, when the invention is complete, it is singularly simple. That which comes from the mind of God, being perfect, goes directly towards its desired end! I admit that certain parts of the Divine Revelation are hard to be understood, but these are intended for our education, that we may exercise our minds and thoughts and may, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, thereby grow.

But in the matter of salvation, where the life or death of a soul is concerned, it is necessary that the vision should be plain and our wise and gracious Lord has condescended to that necessity. In all that concerns repentance, faith and the vital matters of pardon and justification, there is no obscurity, but all is plain as a pikestaff! He that runs may read—and he that reads may run.

You might have expected this from God because of His gracious condescension. When He deigns to speak with a trembling seeker, it is not after the manner of the incomprehensible doctor, but after the manner of a father with his child, desirous that his child should at once know his father's mind. He makes the way so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein! He breaks down His great thoughts to our narrow capacities—He has compassion on the ignorant and He becomes the Teacher of babes. Truly the knowledge which the Lord our God imparts to us is, in itself, sublime, but His manner of teaching is gentle, for He comes with precept upon precept and line upon line, here a little and there a little. He does not come down to us half-way, but He stoops to men of low estate and while He hides these things from the wise and prudent, He reveals them unto babes. "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight."

Remember, my Brothers and Sisters, that our great Lord always takes care that there shall be no provision made for the pride of men. The pride of intellect He hates as much as any other pride. No flesh shall glory in His Presence. He takes the proud in their own craftiness, while He lifts up the humble and the meek. Therefore, we may expect that He will speak in terms that shall be open to shepherds and fishermen, whom others call unlearned and ignorant men, lest the wise men of this world should exalt themselves over the humbler sort. It is no design of the Lord God Almighty that a class of self-constituted superior persons should monopolize the blessings of the Gospel through the Truths of Revelation being wrapt up in learned terms which the vulgar cannot understand!

The various systems of idolatry endeavored to surround their false teaching with a mystic secrecy, but the Word of our God is a revealer of

things hidden from the foundation of the earth. We may be sure that when God deals with men, He will do nothing which shall cause human wisdom to boast itself. None shall glory that, after all, their culture was the one thing necessary to make the Gospel of God effectual. Philosophy shall not pitch its tent in Immanuel's land and cry, "I am, and there is none beside me!" It is after the manner of God, who bows down to the humble and the contrite, that He should make His salvation the joy of the lowly. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings have You ordained strength because of Your enemies." Those who know the living God do not wonder as they read such words as these—"For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

We might also expect simplicity when we remember the design of the plan of salvation. God aims distinctly by the Gospel at the salvation of men. He bids us preach the Gospel to every creature. It has need to be a *simple* Gospel if it is to be preached to every creature! I thank God with all my heart that the sage is here put on a level with the child, for the Gospel must be received by him as a little child receives it! If the Grace of God is given to the least educated person in yonder village, he is as well able to receive the Gospel as the most profound scholar in the university. Would any of you wish to have it otherwise? Could you be so inhuman? Must the Gospel also be enclosed for an aristocracy? Must the cultured few be gratified at the expense of the ruin of the masses? God forbid! But it must be so unless the saving doctrine of the Gospel can be perceived by the untutored many. Every generous heart delights to think that "the poor have the Gospel preached unto them."

Brothers and Sisters, to save the many, the Truth of God must be very simple and easy to be understood, for the many are busy with necessary labor. From morning to night their hands are going to earn the bread that perishes. Their thoughts must largely be taken up with their daily toil. I grant you that many are too much engrossed with the poor cares of common life, but still, to a large extent they will, by necessary occupations, be shut out from close study and steady thought—so they must have a salvation which can be grasped at once—and held without the strain of perpetual debate. If men cannot be saved without weeks and months of careful study, they will certainly be lost! As good have no salvation as one which is beyond ordinary comprehension! Our working men need a Gospel which can be heard and thought upon while they earn their daily bread. It should be clear as the sun and simple as A B C that they may see it and then hold it in their memories. Give me a Gospel which can be written in a line of a boy's copy book, or worked on a girl's sampler—a Gospel which the humblest cottager may learn, love and live upon!

The mass of our fellow men are not only very busy, but from their poverty and other surroundings they never will attain to any high degree of education. We are thankful for all that is done by School Boards and other agencies, but these operate for the present world rather than for eternal

and spiritual things. Men may learn all that books can teach them and not be a jot nearer the knowledge of heavenly Truths of God. Heavenly knowledge is of another sort and is open to those who gain no certificates and pass no standards. Those who truly know their Bibles and find, therein, the appointed Savior, have not reached that point by the learning of the schools! Yet we may say of each one of them, "Blessed are you; for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven." The Word of Life is meant for men as *sinner*s—not for men as philosophers—and, therefore, the message is made plain and clear.

Moreover, we might expect the Gospel to be very plain because of the many feeble minds which otherwise would be unable to receive it. Remember the children. How glad we are that our boys and girls can know and receive the Savior who said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me and forbid them not"! If, in order to their salvation, our children must all be learned divines. If they must understand the discussions of our monthly and fortnightly reviews before they can know the Lord, they are, indeed, in an evil case. Then might we close our Sunday schools, being convinced that the children must perish, or at least must wait until they reach a riper age! Would you have it so? O Sirs, I am sure you would not! Rather would you help to gather in the lambs.

Remember, also, that many return to feebleness of mind in their old age. How many who displayed considerable strength of intellect in middle life find their faculties failing them as their years multiply! We need a Gospel which an old man can grasp when sight and hearing are failing him, when the memory is weakened and the judgment is enfeebled. We need a Gospel which can be laid hold upon in second childhood, otherwise our venerable sires will miss the staff on which they have leaned so long—and other aged persons who have reached the 11th hour without faith in Jesus must be abandoned in despair! Would you have it so? There is not one among us that would so desire it!

Remember, once more, the many feeble intellects which are to be found on all hands—not imbecile, but still not intellectual. Not without thought and reason, but yet with an exceedingly narrow range of understanding. Shall these be shut out by a complicated, philosophical Gospel? We cannot think so! Rather do we bear testimony that we have known many persons strong in faith, giving glory to God and well instructed in Divine doctrine, although in the judgment of boastful wits they have been utterly despised! The Gospel of our salvation saves the feeble-minded as well as the clever! It reaches the slow and dull as well as the quick and bright. Is it not well it should be so? The Lord has given a Gospel which he may grasp who can scarcely grasp anything else! He has put before us a way of salvation in which trembling feet may safely tread and find no cause of stumbling! Our Gospel needs not that we soar upon wings of imagination up to the Heaven of sublimity, nor dive with profound research into the unfathomable sea of mystery! The Lord has brought it near us, put it into our mouths and laid it near our hearts that we who are of the common sort may take it to ourselves and enjoy its blessings.

What do you think, my Friends, would become of the dying if the Gospel were intricate and complex? How would even the *saints* derive conso-

lation in death from a labyrinth of mysteries? We are called, at times, to visit persons who are in their last hours—passing to judgment without God and without hope. It is a sorrowful business. It is always a cause of trembling with us, when we have to deal with the impenitent upon the borders of the eternal world. But we would never visit another sick bed if we had not a Gospel to take to such—a Gospel which can be made plain even to those whose minds are bewildered amid the shadows of the grave! We need a Gospel which a man may receive as he takes a draught of medicine, or, better still, as he takes a cup of cold water from the nurse at his bedside. We should expect that it should be very simple, therefore, and so we find it, from the design of the Gospel, to save the many and to save, even, the least intelligent of men!

Furthermore, dear Friends, *we see that it is so, if we look at its results.* “For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are.” God’s chosen are usually a people of honest and candid mind who are willing to believe rather than to dispute. The Holy Spirit has opened their hearts—He has not made them subtle and quibbling. He has not put them upon the key of perpetual doubting and coming at nothing, but He has tuned them to another note, namely, to incline their hearts and come unto the Lord Jesus and hear that their souls may live! Hence it follows that the mass of those who follow the Lord Jesus are not anxious to be numbered with the wise and the philosophical! They are content, rather, to be believers in Revelation than proficient in speculation. To us, the knowledge of Christ Crucified is the most excellent of the sciences, and the doctrine of the Cross is the loftiest of all philosophies! We had rather receive the Word of our Lord as little children than be held in repute as “men of thought.”

You shall find that those who have preached the Gospel with the most acceptance, whatever their natural gifts and abilities, have almost always been persons who have preferred to use great plainness of speech. They have felt the Gospel to be, in itself, so beautiful that to adorn it with meretricious ornament would be to dishonor it. They could say with Paul, “If our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost.” “We use great plainness of speech.” We are not as Moses, who put a veil over his face. True servants of God take away every veil that they can and labor to set forth Christ evidently crucified among the people. The more they have done this, the more has God been pleased to acknowledge their message to the conversion of souls.

But, Beloved, I need not argue from what we expect or see. I bid you *look to the Revelation itself* and see if it is not near unto us. Even in the days of Moses, how plain some things were! It must have been plain to every Israelite that man is a sinner, otherwise why the sacrifice, why the purging and the cleansings? The whole Levitical economy proclaimed aloud that man has sinned—all the Ten Commandments thundered out

this Truth of God! They could not avoid knowing it. It was also plain that salvation is by sacrifice. Not a day passed without its morning and evening lambs. All the year round there were special sacrifices by which the doctrine of Atonement by blood was clearly declared. It was written clear as a sunbeam, "without shedding of blood there is no remission." Plain enough, also, was the doctrine of *faith*, for each bringer of a sacrifice laid his hand upon the victim, confessing his sin and, by that act, he transferred his sin to the offering. Thus faith was typically described as that act by which we accept the Propitiation prepared of God and recognize the God-given Substitute.

It was also clear to every Israelite that this cleansing was not the effect of the typical sacrifices themselves, otherwise they would not have been repeated year by year and day by day, for as Paul well puts it, the conscience being once purged, there would be no necessity for further sacrifice. The remembrance of sin was made over and over again to let Israel know that the visible sacrifices pointed to the real way of cleansing and were meant to set forth that blessed Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. In many ways the Jew was put off from resting in forms and ceremonies and was directed to the inner truth, the *spiritual* substance, which is Christ. Equally clear it must have been to every Israelite that the faith which brings the benefit of the great sacrifice is a practical and operative faith which affects the life and character. Continually were they exhorted to serve the Lord with their whole *heart*. They were exhorted to holiness and warned against transgression and taught to render hearty obedience to the Commandments of the Lord. So that, dim as the dispensation may be considered to have been as compared with the Gospel day, yet actually and positively it was sufficiently clear. Even then "the Word was near" to them, "in their mouth and in their heart."

If I may say thus much of the Mosaic dispensation, I may boldly assert that *in the Gospel of Christ the Truth of God is now made more abundantly manifest*. Moses brought the moonlight, but in Jesus the sun has risen and we rejoice in His meridian beams! Brothers and Sisters, blessed are our eyes that we see and our ears that we hear things which Prophets and kings desired in vain to see and hear! Now our Lord speaks plainly and uses no proverb. In our streets we hear the Gospel and have no need to ride the sky or scour the sea to find it! This day we hear every man in his own tongue wherein was born the wonderful works of God!

II. Secondly, THE WORD HAS COME VERY NEAR TO US. I want your earnest attention to this point. I beg those of you who are unconverted to hear with attention. To us all, the Gospel has come very near—to the inhabitants of these favored isles it is emphatically so. "The Word is very near unto you, in your mouth." It is a thing which you can speak of; you have talked about it; you still talk of it. It is "familiar in your mouths as household words." Most of you are able to speak it to others, for you learned it in your Catechisms, you repeated it to your Sunday school teachers. You sing it in your hymns; you read it in books, tracts and pamphlets and you write it in letters to your friends. I am glad that you have it upon your tongues—the more it is so, the better—but how near has it come? Oh, that your tongue may also be able to say, "I believe it. I

accept Jesus as my Savior. I avow my faith before men!" Then will it be still nearer. Oh, that God the Holy Spirit may graciously lead you to do so!

The Word of Life is not a thing unknowable and, consequently, *unspeakable*—it is a thing that can be spoken of by tongues like ours when we sit in the house or walk by the way. The great thought of God has come very near to us when it can be expressed in the speech of men. I dare humbly, but boldly, to speak of my own ministry and of you as my hearers, that the Word of God comes very near to you from this pulpit, for I have always aimed at the utmost plainness of speech and directness of address. There is not lack of plain speaking. The word is on your tongue.

Moses also added, "and in your heart." By the heart, with the Hebrews, is not meant the affections, but the inward parts, including the *understanding*. My dear Hearers, you can understand the Gospel! That whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved, is not a dark saying. Salvation by Grace through faith is a doctrine as plain as the nose on your face! That Jesus Christ gave Himself to die in the place of men, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life, is a thing to be understood of the least educated under Heaven. Moreover, the doctrines of the Gospel are such that our inward nature bears witness to the truth of them. When we preach that men are sinners, your conscience says, "That is true." When we declare that there is salvation by *sacrifice*, your understanding agrees that this is a gracious mode by which God is just and the Justifier of him that believes.

Even if you are not saved by it, you cannot help feeling that it is a system worthy of God, that He should save through the gift of His only-begotten Son as a Sacrifice for sin. If you believe it, this Gospel will appear so plainly true that every part of your nature will attest it. Many of us have accepted this way of salvation—we now love it and delight in it—and to us it seems the most simple and, at the same time, the most sublime system that could be conceived of. Our heart drinks it in as Gideon's fleece drank in the dew! Our souls live on it and in it as the fish lives in the sea. We rejoice in the Gospel as the flowers smile in the sun! How glad we are that we have not a Gospel wrapped up in hieroglyphics, or entombed in cold metaphysics! It has entered our hearts! It dwells within us and has become our bosom's Lord.

There are no difficulties and obscurities about the Gospel except such as we, ourselves, create. What we think to be its darkness is really our blindness. If you do not believe the Gospel, why is it that you do not believe it? It is supported by the best of evidence and it is, in itself, evidently true. The reason for your unbelief lies partly in the natural tendency of the human heart towards legalism. Human nature cannot believe in Free Grace. It is accustomed to buying and selling and, therefore, it must bring a price in its hand—to have everything for nothing seems out of the question! The notion of a wage to be earned is natural enough, but that eternal life is the *gift* of God is not so readily perceived! Yet so it is. I have heard that a missionary trying to make an Oriental understand salvation by Grace set it out in many ways to him and failed until, at last, he cried, "Salvation is a *backsheesh* of the Almighty." Then the Eastern caught the idea. Eternal life is the free gift of God which He bestows on men not be-

cause of anything in them, or anything that they have done, or felt, or promised, but because of His own infinite bounty and the delight which He has in showing mercy! You cannot get the idea of Grace into a natural man's head—it requires a Divine surgical operation to open a way for this Truth of God into our mercenary minds. Yes, it requires that we be made anew before we will see it! That God freely forgives and that He loves men solely and only because He is Love, is a thought divinely simple, but our selfish prejudices refuse to accept it.

In many instances it is pride that makes the Gospel appear so difficult. You cannot think that Jesus saves you and that all you have to do is to accept His finished salvation. Like Naaman, you would prefer to do some great thing. You want to *be* something, do you not? Human nature craves to have a little hand in salvation—to feel something, to groan a certain time, or despair to a certain length—but when the Gospel comes with the one message, “Believe and live,” pride will not consent to be saved on such pauperizing terms! Yet so it is. Accept it and you have it! Stretch out your hand and take what God most freely gives! The Gospel, itself is plain enough to a heart humbled by Grace. When the scales of pride are removed from the eyes, we see well enough. Alas for the unbelief which grows out of this pride and out of our natural enmity against God! Man will believe anybody but his God. Any lie in the newspaper has legs with which to run round the world—but a grand Truth of God that leaps from the lips of Jehovah, Himself, is made to limp in the presence of ungodly men. Unregenerate men cannot and will not believe their God!

This is also caused by the love of sin. Those who do not wish to give up their favorite sins pretend the Gospel is very difficult to understand, or quite impossible to accept—and so they excuse themselves for going on in their iniquity. After all, does any man really feel that it is right to throw the blame of his unbelief upon God? Do you dare to make the Gospel the cause of your ruin? Do you ask pity for yourself, as if you could not help being an enemy to God and a rejecter of His way of mercy? Do you murmur that you cannot see? Who has closed your eyes? There are none so blind as those who will not see—your blindness is willful. You do not understand—do you wish to understand? Nothing is so incomprehensible as that which we do not want to comprehend! If you do not desire to be reconciled to God, is it amazing that you dream that God is unwilling to be reconciled to you? O Soul, I beseech you, do not impute your damnation to your God who, in infinite goodness, has brought His Word so very near to you! Salvation is of the Lord, but damnation is only of man!

There I leave the matter. I can bring you to the water, but I cannot make you drink. May God the Holy Spirit apply to your hearts and consciences the important Truth of God that, whether you enter it or not, “the Kingdom of God has come near unto you!” O Lord, grant that none of these, my Hearers, may put from them Your Word and count themselves unworthy of eternal life!

III. I close with this, that THE DESIGN OF THIS SIMPLICITY AND NEARNESS OF THE GOSPEL IS THAT WE SHOULD RECEIVE IT. Observe how the text expressly words it—“The Word is very near unto you, in your mouth and in your heart, *that you may do it.*” “That you may *do it.*” You,

who have your Bibles open, will note that the 12th verse finishes—"That we may hear it and do it." The 13th verse also says, "That we may hear it and do it." That is twice; but when it comes to the *third* time, in the 14th verse, it is not, "That we may hear it and do it," but, "That we may do it." You have had enough of hearing, some of you—you have heard until your ears must almost ache with hearing! You begin now to say, "It is the old story, we are always hearing that and nothing else." Will you not go a step further and be no longer hearers only? "Now, then, *do it.*"

The Gospel is not sent to men to gratify their curiosity by letting them see how other people get to Heaven. Christ did not come to amuse us, but to redeem us! His Word is not written for our astonishment, but, "these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and, that believing, you may have life through His name." The Gospel always has a present, urgent, practical errand. It says to each man, "I have a message from God unto you." It cries, "Today!" and warns men not to harden their hearts.

Observe, again, how the text puts its last address in the singular. You can *hear* it in the plural—"That *we* may hear it and do it"—but the actual doing is always in the singular—"That *you* may do it." I cannot come round to everybody in the Tabernacle and take a seat by your side for a minute. But I wish I could do so and put my hand on every unconverted person and say, "The Word is very near unto you, in your mouth, and in your heart that you may do it."

As the Word of the Lord is not sent to gratify curiosity, so it is also not sent to coolly inform you of a fact which you may lay by on the shelf for future use. God does not send you an anchor to hang up in your boat-house, but, as you are already at sea, he puts the anchor on board for present use. The Gospel is sent us as manna for *today*, to be eaten at once. It is to be our spending money as well as our treasure!

Oh, my Hearer, as you are a dying man, I charge you to accept at once the present salvation, so that you may at once do what the Word of God requires of you!

It is not even sent to you merely to make you orthodox in opinion as to religious matters, although many persons seem to think that this is the one thing necessary. Remember, that Hell for the orthodox will be quite as horrible as eternal ruin for the heterodox. It will be a dreadful thing to go to Hell with a sound head and a rotten heart! Alas, I fear that some of you will only increase your own misery as you increase your knowledge of the Truth of God because you do not practice what you know! God save us from dead knowledge and give us the gracious action which is the fruit of knowing—"That you may do it!"

Oh, that I could forego language, now, and that my *heart* could speak in some mysterious inward fashion to your hearts! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would now incline each of you to serious personal attention to this matter! Oh, my Hearer, you have come here to listen to me, "that you may do it!" Oh, that it may be done!

What is to be done? There are two things to be done. First, that you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. Take Him to be your Sacrifice—trust Him wholly and alone from this time forth as your Ransom

from sin. Take Him to be your Lord as well as your Savior! Yield yourself up to Him as your Prophet, Priest and King. Let Jesus be your All in All and be you wholly His. The second thing is that you confess your Lord with your mouth. Avow yourself to be a Believer in Jesus and a follower of Him. Do this in His own way, for He has said, "He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved." But let your confession be sincere—do not lie to the Lord! Confess that you are His follower because you *are*, indeed so and, from now on, all your life, bear His Cross and follow Him. This is what you are to do—yield yourself up to Him whom God has appointed to save His people from their sins.

"But," says one, "I thought that there was a certain *experience*." Indeed there is an experience, but all true experience ends in this—in leading the heart to accept Christ as its Savior. "But I thought," says another, "that you would dwell at length upon the work of the Holy Spirit." I rejoice in that work and will tell you a great deal about it at another time—but the chief work of the Holy Spirit is to strip you of yourself and bring you to receive that simple Word of God which is the subject of this morning's discourse. "Well," says one, "I grant you that it is simple! I think it is even *too* simple." I know it! I know it! And because it is so simple, you, therefore, kick against it. What folly! Therefore you need the Holy Spirit to bring you to accept it. Sometimes you quarrel because it is too hard and next because it is too easy. This shows how hard and stubborn a thing is the will of man! Almighty Grace is required to bring you to accept your own salvation! To lead you to take Christ to be your Savior needs a miracle of Grace! Let Him save you, that is all—but this is too much for our proud self-confidence. Oh, strange resistance, proving the deep depravity of man's nature, that he will not yield even to this!

Again I say, the difficulty is not in the *Gospel*, but in the man, whose evil heart will not receive the choicest gift of Heaven! If you are willing to have Christ, Christ is yours! The fact that you are willing to receive Him proves that He has come to you. Believe that He is yours and be at peace. If you will now bow before the Christ of God and take Him to be your Savior, you are saved! The simple act of trusting Jesus has brought your justification—and your open confession of Him in His own appointed way shall bring you a fuller realization of salvation. By coming out on the Lord's side, you shall gather strength to overcome the sins which now beset you and you shall be helped to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling because God is working in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure.

I will preach the Gospel once more and I have done. The Apostle Paul, thinking of what Moses said about going up to the sky or down to the sea to find the sacred secret, says in effect, "That is right, Moses. There was a necessity for someone to come down and an equal necessity for someone to go up—but that necessity exists no longer." The whole Gospel lies in this—there was One in Heaven at the right hand of the Father, very God of very God and, in order to save you, poor lost and ruined sinner, this adorable Son of God came down, down, down to the manger, to the Cross, to the grave, to the lowest parts of the earth—and down in grief, in rejection, in agony, in death. Because He came under the weight and curse of sin,

He came down, indeed! Because Jesus has come down, thus, and borne the punishment of sin, he that believes in Him is justified. By that coming down of the Lord from Heaven, the sinner's sin is put away and the transgression of the Believer is forgiven. Do you believe this? Do you believe that Jesus bore your sins in His own body on the tree? Will you trust to that fact? **YOU ARE SAVED!** *Doubt it not!*

So far this clears you of sin. But it was necessary that we should not merely be washed from sin—for that would leave us naked—but that we should be clothed with righteousness. To that end our Lord Jesus rose again and so came up from the depth. When our Redeemer had finished His going down and so had made an end of sin, He had yet to bring in everlasting righteousness—and so He returned by the way which He went. He rose from the tomb! He rose from Olivet! He rose until a cloud received Him out of His Apostles' sight! He rose through the upper regions of the air! He rose to the pearl gate! He rose to the Throne of God where He sits as One who has accomplished His service, expecting until His enemies are made His footstool! His Resurrection has brought to light our righteousness and has covered us with it, so that, at this moment, every man that believes in a risen Savior is robed in the royal robes of the righteousness of God! "If you believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." O Brothers and Sisters, live because Jesus lives, rise because He has risen, sit in Heaven because He sits in Heaven!

"He that believes is justified." So says the Scripture. Do you see this? I believe it, I believe it with my whole heart and, therefore, I confess it before this multitude with my mouth and I am saved! Will you believe and confess it? Oh, that the blessed Spirit may bring you to this, for this is the entrance into the way of eternal life! This is the dawn of a day which shall never die down into darkness! May the blessed Spirit bring you to this faith and this confession, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Deuteronomy 30 Romans 10:4-10.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—916, 488, 495.

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RELIGION—REALITY!

NO. 457

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 22, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For it not a vain thing for you, because it is your life.”
Deuteronomy 31:47.***

IT appears from this closing remark of Moses that there were men in his time who thought religion to be vain, although, under the system which then existed, there were many plain proofs of its usefulness—for they who served God in those days prospered, and national advantages always followed national obedience to God. Under the theocratic government of the Israelites in the wilderness, and in their early history when established in Canaan, their offenses against God’s Law brought upon them famine, plague, or the scourge of marauding hosts—while repentance, and a return to allegiance always brought them a deliverer and a restoration of peace and plenty.

They had visibly before their eyes proofs that God did reward virtue. And yet, notwithstanding this, there were some so besotted against God, that they said, “It is a vain thing to serve the Lord.” Do you wonder, therefore, that there should be many such under the Gospel, today? It would, indeed, be marvelous if there were not many more, for the Gospel is a far more spiritual system than the Jewish dispensation, and its blessings are not of a carnal order. No blessing apparent to carnal eyes rests upon the godly, but sometimes the case appears to be reversed—we see the wicked prosper, and the righteous are trod under foot.

The Christian dispensation is one which requires much faith to receive it. We walk not by sight, but by faith alone. And it is little marvel that when ungodly men see the righteous afflicted, and discover that their comfort lies in matters which only faith can apprehend, they should cry out, “It is a vain thing,” and should turn aside from the ordinances of God. Besides, to confess the Truth of God, there have been so many counterfeits of true religion that it is not remarkable that unconverted men should consider even the genuine article to be but a vain thing.

Men have made pretences of wondrous sanctity, while inwardly full of rottenness. And sinners have learned to argue with terrible logic—“They are none of them good. They are all deceivers. The best of them are hypocrites, and religion, itself, is a vain thing.” However false may be the conclusion here—and we believe it to be utterly so—yet we do not wonder that men, desiring to believe religion to be a falsehood, have found some support for their unbelief in the hypocrisy of professors.

Now we will grant you, this morning, that much of the religion which is abroad in the world is a vain thing. The religion of *ceremonies* is vain. If a man shall trust in the gorgeous pomp of uncommanded mysteries, if he shall consider that there resides some mystic efficacy in a priest, and that by uttering certain words a blessing is infallibly received, we tell him that

his religion is a vain thing. You might as well go to the witch of Endor for grace as to a priest. And if you rely upon *words*, the “*abracadabra*” of a magician will as certainly raise you to Heaven, or rather sink you to Hell, as the performances of the best ordained minister under Heaven.

Ceremonies in themselves are vain, futile, empty. There are but two of God’s ordaining. They are most simple, and neither of them pretend to have any efficacy in themselves. They only set forth an inward and spiritual Grace, not necessarily tied to them, but only given to those who by faith perceive their teachings. All ceremonial religion, no matter how sincere, if it consists in relying upon forms and observances, is a vain thing. So with *creed-religion*—by which I mean not to speak against creeds, for I love “the form of sound words”—but that religion which lies in believing with the intellect a set of dogmas, without partaking of the life of God—all this is a vain thing.

Again, that religion *which only lies in making a profession of what one does not possess*, in wearing the Christian name and observing the rituals of the Church, but which does not so affect the character as to make a man holy, nor so touch the heart as to make a man God’s true servant—such a religion is vain throughout. O my dear Hearers, how much worthless religion may you see everywhere! So long as men get the name, they seem content without the substance. Everywhere—it matters not to what Church you look—you see a vast host of hypocrites, numerous as flies about a dead carcass. On all sides there are deceivers and deceived, who write, “Heaven” upon their brows, but have Hell in their hearts. They hang out the sign of an angel over their doors but have the devil for a host within. Take heed to yourselves. Be not deceived, for He who tries the heart and searches the reins of the children of men is not mocked, and He will surely discern between him that fears God and him that fears Him not.

But with all these allowances, we still this morning assert most positively that the religion of Christ Jesus which has been revealed to us of the Holy Spirit by the Apostles and Prophets and especially by the Messiah Himself, when truly received into the heart, is no vain thing. We shall handle the text four ways, taking the word “vain” in different shades of meaning. *It is no fiction. It is no trifle. It is no folly. It is no speculation.* In each case we will prove our assertion by the second sentence—“Because it is your life.”

I. First, then, the true religion of Christ, which consists in a vital faith in His Person, His blood, His righteousness, and which produces obedience to His commands, and a love to God, IS NOT A FICTION.

I am not going to argue this morning. I was never sent to argue but to teach and speak dogmatically. I assert, in the name of all those who have tried it, that true religion is not a fiction *to us*. It is to us the grandest of all realities, and we hope that our testimony and witness, if we are honest men, may prevail with others who may be skeptical upon this point. We say, then, that *the objects* of true religion are, to those who believe in Jesus, no fiction.

God the Father to whom we look with the spirit of adoption, is no fiction to us. I know that to some men the Divine Being is a mere abstraction. As

to communing with Him, as to speaking to Him, they think such wonders may have occurred to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob—but to them such things are impossible. Now we do solemnly assure you, as men who would not lie in this matter, that God the Father is to us as real a Person as the man from whose loins we sprang, and that we have as surely talked to Him, and He has as truly spoken to our hearts as ever we have spoken with a friend and have been answered by him.

We tell you that to us the Being of God is a fact which influences our whole life, checks us when we would sin, forbids our weaker passions to rebel, and nerves our nobler powers to do or suffer. Our consciousness, our experience, our emotions, and our whole being tell us that there is a God. We have had personal dealings with Him. He has been with us in our chamber. We have seen His face in the sanctuary. We have cast our cares upon Him. And therefore, to us, the Eternal and indwelling Father is no fiction.

So is it with *Christ Jesus*. To mere professors, Christ Jesus is never anything but a myth. They believe there was such a man, but He is only an historical personage to them. To true Believers in Christ, however, He is a real Person, now existing, and now dwelling in the hearts of His people. And oh, I bear my witness that if there is anything which has ever been certified to my consciousness, it is the existence of Jesus, the Man, the Son of God. Oh Friends, have we not, when our soul has been in a rapture, thrust our finger into the prints of the nails?

Have we not been so drawn away from the outward world that in spiritual communing we could say He was to us as our Brother that sucked the breasts of our mother, and when we found Him without, we did embrace Him and we would not let Him go? His left hand has been under our head, and His right hand has embraced us. I know this will sound like a legend even to men who profess to be Christ's followers, but I question the reality of your piety if Christ is not One for whom you live, and in whom you dwell. With whom you walk and in whom you hope soon to sleep that you may wake up in His likeness. A real Christ and a real God—no man has real religion till he knows these.

So again *the Holy Spirit*, who is with the Father and the Son, the one God of Israel. The God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, indivisibly One and yet everlastingly Three—the Holy Spirit is also real, for—

***“He, in our hearts of sin and woe
Makes living streams of Divine Grace arise,
Which into boundless glory flow.”***

Tell us there is no Spirit? Why, about this we can speak positively. A fool may say that there is no magnetic influence, and that no electric streams can flow along the wires—but they who have once been touched by that mysterious power know it. And the Holy Spirit's influence on men is quite as much within the sphere of our recognition, if we have ever felt it, as is the influence of galvanism or magnetism.

Those who have once felt the spiritual life know when it is flowing in, when in strength it is withdrawn, and when it returns anew. They know that at times they can do all things. Their heaviest trial is a joy, and their weightiest burden a delight. And at other times they can do nothing, being bowed down to the very dust with weakness. They know that at times they

enjoy peace with God through Jesus Christ, and that at other times they are disturbed in spirit. They have discovered, too, that these changes do not depend upon the weather, nor upon circumstances, nor upon any relation of one thought to another, but upon certain secret, mystic, and Divine impulses which come forth from the Spirit of God. They make a man more than man, for he is filled with Deity from head to foot—and whose withdrawal makes him feel less than man, for he is filled with sin and drenched with iniquity—till he loathes his own being.

Tell us there is no Holy Spirit? We have seen His goings in the sanctuary, but as we shall have to mention these by-and-by, we pass on, and only now affirm that the Father, Son, and Spirit are to true Christians no fiction, no dream, no fancy. They are as real and as true as persons whom we can see, things which we can handle, or viands which we can taste.

But further, we can also say that *the experience* which true religion brings is no fiction. Believe me, Sirs, it is no fiction *to repent*. For there is a bitterness in it which makes it all too real. Oh, the agony of sin lying on an awakened conscience! If you have ever felt it, it will seem to you as the ravings of a madman when any shall tell you that religion is not real! When the great hammer of the Law broke our hearts in pieces it was a stern reality.

These eyes have sometimes, before I knew the Savior, been ready to start from my head with horror, and my soul has often been bowed down with a grief far too terrible ever to be told to my fellow man. When I have felt that I was guilty before God, that my Maker was angry with me, that He must punish me, and that I deserved, and must suffer His eternal wrath—I assure you there was no fiction there! And when the Spirit of God comes into the heart and takes all our grief away, and gives us *joy and peace in believing in Christ*, there is no fiction then, either.

Of course, to other men this is no evidence, except they will believe our honesty. But to us it is the very best of evidence. We were bid to believe on Christ. It was all we were to do—to look to His Cross, to believe Him to be the propitiation for sin, and to trust in Him to save us. We did so, and oh, the joy of that moment! In one instant we leaped from the depths of Hell to the very heights of Heaven in experience. Dragged up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay—our feet were set upon a rock and we could sing for very joy. Oh, the mirth! Oh, the bliss! Oh, the ecstasy of the soul that can say—

***“Happy, happy, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away,
Happy, happy, happy day.”***

That was no fiction, surely. If it is so, I will continue to cry, “Blessed fiction! Blessed dream! May I contrive to believe You! May I always be so deluded if this is to be deluded and misled!”

Since then, look at the Believer’s experience. He has had as many troubles as other men have, but oh, what comforts he has had! He lost his wife, and as he stood there and thought his heart would break, he could still say, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” Child after child sickened before his loving gaze, and as they went one after the other to the tomb where he often wished he

could have slept instead of them—while he mourned and wept as Jesus did, yet still he could say, “Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him.”

When the house was burned—when the property vanished—when trade ran ill—when character was slandered—when the soul was desponding and all but despairing, yet there came in that one ray of light, “Christ is All, and all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose.” I can tell you that Christians have often had their brightest days when other people thought they were in their darkest nights. And they have often had the best of dainties when there was a famine abroad.

Is this a fiction? O Sirs, we challenge you to find so blessed a fiction as this elsewhere! I saw last Friday a sight, enough to make one weep, indeed—there in the back room of the house lay a fine youth, a member of this Church, sickening and near to death of consumption. And he talked to me joyously of his prospect of entering into the rest which remains for the people of God! There in the front room, on the same floor, lay his sister, I suppose but some two years younger, withering under the same disease. And there sat the tender mother with her two children, thinking to lose them both within a few days and though she said, it was natural to weep, yet she could say even under this sharp trial, “The Lord’s name be magnified in it all.”

I say there was no fiction there. If you who think there is a fiction that such things could live among Christians—if you could see the poor, cheerfully suffering—if you could mark the sick, and how joyously they bear their pains—if you could see the dying, and hear their shouts of triumph, you would say, “There is a reality here. There is something in true religion. Let *me* die the death of the righteous. Let my last end be like his!”

But further. As we are sure there is a reality in the objects, and in the experience of true godliness, so are we quite clear that there is a reality in its *privileges*. One of the privileges of the Christian is prayer. It is the Believer’s privilege to go to God and ask for what he wants and have it. Now, Sirs, I am absolutely certain that prayer is a reality. I shall not tell here my own experience. One reads not his love-letters in the streets—one tells not his own personal dealings with God in public. But if there is a fact that can be proved by ten thousand instances, and which, therefore, no reasonable man has any right to doubt—if there is anything that is true under Heaven—it is true that God hears prayer when it comes not out of feigned lips, and is offered through Jesus Christ.

I know when we tell the story, men smile and say, “Ah, these were singular coincidences!” Why, I have seen, in my life, answers to prayer so remarkable that if God had torn the curtain of the heavens and thrust out His arm to work a deliverance, it could not have been more decidedly and distinctly a Divine interposition than when He listened to my feeble cry for help. I speak not of myself as though I were different from other men in this, for it is so with all who have real godliness. They know that God hears them. They prove it today—they intend to prove it at this very hour.

Communion with Christ is another reality. The shadow of His Cross is too refreshing to be a dream, and the sunlight of His face is too bright to be a delusion. Precious Jesus! You are a storehouse of substantial de-

lights and solid joy. Then, the privileges of *Christian love towards one another* are real. I know they are not with some men. Why, look at some of your fashionable Churches. If the poor people were to speak to the richer ones, what would the rich ones think of them? Why, snap their heads half off, and send them about their business! But where there is true Christianity, we feel that the only place in the world where there can ever be liberty, equality, and fraternity, is in the Church of Christ.

To attempt this politically is but to attempt an impossibility—but to foster it in the Church of God, where we are all allied to God—is but to nourish the very spirit of the Gospel. I say there is a reality in Christian love, for I have seen it among my flock. And though some do not show it as they should, yet my heart rejoices that there is so much hearty brotherly love among you, and thus your religion is not a vain thing.

Once more upon this point, for I am spending all my time here, while I need it for other points. The religion of Christ is evidently not a vain thing *if you look at its effects*. We will not take you abroad now to tell you of the effects of the Gospel of Christ in the South Sea. We need not remind you of what it has done for the heathen, but let me tell you what it has done for men *here*. Ah, Brethren, you will not mind my telling some of the secrets—secrets that bring the tears to my eyes as I reflect upon them—when I speak of the thief, the harlot, the drunkard, the Sabbath-breaker, the swearer, I may say, “Such were some of you, but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you rejoice in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

How many a man has been going by the door there and has said, “I’ll go in and hear Old Spurgeon.” He came in to make merriment of the preacher and very little that troubles *him*. But the man has stood there until the Word has gone home to him, and he who was likely to beat his wife and to make his home a Hell, has before long been to see me, and has given me a grip of the hand and said, “God Almighty bless you, Sir. There is something in true religion!” “Well, let us hear your story.” We have heard it and delightful it has been in hundreds of instances.

“Very well, send for your wife, and let us hear what she says about you.” The woman has come and we have said, “Well, what do you think of your husband now, Ma’am?” “Oh, Sir, such a change I never saw in my life. He is so kind to us. He is like an angel now, and he seemed like a fiend before. Oh, that cursed drink, Sir! Everything went to the public house. And then if I went up to the House of God, he did nothing but abuse me. Oh, to think that now he comes with me on Sunday! And the shop is shut up, Sir. And the children, who used to be running about without a bit of shoe or stocking, he takes them on his knees and prays with them so sweetly. Oh, there is such a change!”

Surly people say, “Will it last? Will it last?” Well, I have seen it last the eight years of my pastorate, in many cases, and I know it will last forever, for I am persuaded that it is God’s work. We will put it to all the Social Science Societies. We will put it to all the different religions under Heaven, whether they know the art of turning sinners into saints. Whether they can make lions into lambs, and ravens into doves. Why, I know a man who was as stingy a soul as could be, once. And now he is as generous a

man as walks God's earth. There is another, he was not immoral, but he was passionate—and now he is as quiet as a lamb.

It is Divine Grace that has altered these characters, and yet you tell me that this is a fiction! I have not patience to answer you. A fiction? If religion does not prove itself to be true by these facts, then do not believe it. If it does not, when it comes into a neighborhood, turn it upside down, sweep the cobwebs out of its sky, clean the houses, take the men out of the public houses. If it does not make swearers pray, and hard-hearted men tender and compassionate, then it is not worth a button. But our religion does do all this, and therefore we boldly say it is not a vain thing.

Besides, to the man who really possesses it, *it is his life*. He is not a man, and a Christian, but he is all a Christian. He is not as some are, men and Members of Parliament, who have many things to attend to and attend Parliament, also. But the man who is thoroughly a Christian is a Christian every bit of him. He lives Christianity. He eats it. He drinks it. He sleeps it. He walks it. Wherever you see him, he has his religion. His religion is not like a man's regimentals which he can take off and go in undress. It is inside of him. It is woven right through and through him. When the shuttle of his religion was thrown, it went right through the core of his heart, and you must kill that man to get his religion out of him.

Racks may tear his nerves and sinews, but they cannot tear away his hope, for it is essentially and vitally part and parcel of himself. Ah, Ladies and Gentlemen, you who think religion is no more real than the life of a butterfly, it is *you* who are unreal in your fancies and your follies! Religion is the substance, and your life is only the shadow! Oh, you working men, who think that to be godly is but to indulge a dream, you know not what you say. All else is fiction but this. All else is but a moonbeam phantom—this is sun-lit reality. God give you Grace to get it, and then you will feel we have not spoken too strongly but rather have spoken too little of that which is essentially and really true.

II. Secondly, "It is not a vain thing"—that is, IT IS NO TRIFLE. If religion is false, it is the basest imposition under Heaven. But if the religion of Christ is true, it is the most solemn truth that was ever known! It is not a thing that a man dares to trifle with if it is true, for it is at his soul's peril to make a jest of it. If it is not true, it is detestable. But if it is true, it deserves all a man's faculties to consider it, and all his powers to obey it. It is not a trifle.

Briefly consider why it is not. *It deals with your soul*. If it dealt with your body it were no trifle, for it is well to have the limbs of the body sound—but it has to do with *your soul*. As much as a man is better than the garments that he wears, so much is the soul better than the body. It is your *immortal* soul it deals with. Your soul has to live forever, and the religion of Christ deals with its destiny. Can you laugh at such words as Heaven and Hell, at glory and at damnation? If you can, if you think these trifles, then is the faith of Christ to be trifled with.

Consider also with whom it connects you—*with God*—before whom angels bow themselves and veil their faces. Is HE to be trifled with? Trifle with your monarch, if you will, but not with the King of kings, the Lord of lords. Remember that *those who have ever known anything of it* tell you it

is no child's play. The *saints* will tell you it is no trifle to be converted. They will never forget the pangs of conviction, nor the joys of faith. They tell you it is no trifle to have religion, for it carries them through all their conflicts, bears them up under all distresses, cheers them under every gloom and sustains them in all labor. They find it no mockery.

The Christian life to them is something so solemn that when they think of it, they fall down before God and say, "Hold You me up and I shall be safe." And *sinner*s, too, when they are in their senses, find it no trifle. When they come to die they find it no little thing to die without Christ. When conscience gets the grip of them and shakes them, they find it no small thing to be without a hope of pardon—with guilt upon the conscience and no means of getting rid of it. And, Sirs, *true ministers of God* feel it to be no trifle. I do, myself, feel it to be such an awful thing to preach God's Gospel, that if it were not, "Woe unto me if I do not preach the Gospel," I would resign my charge this moment. I would not for the proudest consideration under Heaven know the agony of mind I felt but this morning before I ventured upon this platform! Nothing but the hope of winning souls from death and Hell, and a stern conviction that we have to deal with the grandest of all realities, would bring me here.

A pastor's office is no sinecure. A man that has the destinies of a kingdom under his control may well feel his responsibility. But he who has the destiny of souls laid instrumentally at his door must travail in birth and know a mother's pangs. He must strive with God and know an agony, and yet a joy which no other man can meddle with. It is no trifle to us, we do assure you. Oh, make it no trifle to yourselves! I know I speak to some triflers this morning, and perhaps to some trifling professors.

Oh, professors, do not live so as to make worldlings think that your religion is a trifling thing! Be cheerful but, oh, be holy! Be happy, for that is your privilege. But oh, be heavenly-minded, for that is your *duty*. Let men see that you are not flirting with Christ, but that you are married to Him. Let them see that you are not dabbling in this as in a little speculation but that it is the business of your life, the stern business of all your powers, to live to Christ, Christ also living in you.

III. But next and very briefly, for time flies. The religion of Christ is no vain thing—that is, IT IS NO FOLLY.

Thinking Men and Women! Yes, by the way, we have had thinking men and women who have been able to think in so indirect a manner that they have thought it consistent with their consciences to profess to hold the doctrines of the Church of England, and to be Romanists or infidels! God deliver us from ever being able to think in their way! I always dislike the presence of a man who carries a gun with him which will discharge shot in a circle. Surely he is a very ill companion and if he should become your enemy how are you to escape from him?

Give me a straightforward, downright man, who says what he means and means what he says. And I would sooner have the most gross reprobate who will speak plainly what he means, than I would have the most dandy of gentlemen who would not hurt your feelings, but who will profess to believe as you do, while in his heart he rejects every sentiment and abhors thought which you entertain. I trust I do not speak to any persons

here who can think as this. Still, you say, “Well but the religion of Christ, why, you see, it is the poor that receive it.” Bless God it is! “Well but not many thinking people receive it.” Now that is not true, but at the same time, if they did not, we would not particularly mind, because all thinking people do not think aright and very many of them think very wrongly, indeed.

But such a man as Newton could think, and yet receive the Gospel. And masterminds, whom it is not mine just now to mention, have bowed down before the sublimity of the simple revelation of Christ. And they have felt it to be their honor to lay their wealth of intellect at the feet of Christ. But, Sirs, where is the folly of true religion? Is it a folly to be providing for the world to come? “Oh, no.” Is it a folly to make the Author of your being its first end? “No, no.” Is it altogether a folly to believe that there is such a thing as justice? I think not. And that if there is such a thing as justice, it involves punishment! There is no great folly there.

Well, then, is it any folly to perceive that there is no way of escaping from the effects of our offenses except justice be satisfied? Is that folly? And if it is fact that Christ has satisfied justice for all who trust in Him, is it folly to trust Him? If it IS a folly to escape from the flames of Hell, then let us be fools. If it IS folly to lay hold of Him who gives us eternal life—oh, blessed folly! Let us be more foolish, still. Let us take deep dives into the depths of this foolishness! God forbid that we should do anything else but glory in being such fools as this for Christ’s sake!

What, Sirs, is *your* wisdom? Your wisdom dwells in denying what your eyes can see—a God. In denying what your consciences tell you—that you are guilty. In denying what should be your best hope, what your spirit really craves—redemption in Christ Jesus. Your folly lies in following a perverted nature instead of obeying the dictates of One who points you to the right path. You are wise and you drink poison. We are fools and we take the antidote. You are wise and you hunt the shadow. We are fools and we grasp the Substance. You are wise—you labor and put your money into a bag which is full of holes—and spend it for that which is not bread and which never gives you satisfaction. And we are fools enough to be satisfied, to be happy, to be perfectly content with Heaven and God—

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

Blessed folly! Oh, blessed folly! But it is not a foolish thing. For *it is your life*. Ah, Sirs, if you would have philosophy, it is in Christ. If you would accomplish the proudest feats of human intellect, it is to attain to the knowledge of Christ crucified. Here the man whose mind makes him elephantine may find depths in which he may swim. Here the most recondite learning shall find itself exhausted. Here the most brilliant imagination shall find its highest flights exceeded. Here the critic shall have enough to criticize throughout eternity. Here the reviewer may review and review again, and never cease.

Here the man who understands history may crown his knowledge by the history of God in the world. Here men who would know the secret, the greatest secret which Heaven and earth and Hell can tell, may find it

out—for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant. All the learning of man is doubtless folly to the angels, but the foolishness of God in the Gospel is wisdom to cherubim and seraphim, and by the Church shall be made known to them in ages to come the manifold wisdom of God.

IV. And now for the last point, hurriedly again—“It is not a vain thing”—that is, IT IS NO SPECULATION.

People sometimes ask us what we think about the heathen, whether they will be saved or not. Well, Sirs, there is room for difference of opinion there. But I should like to know what you think about *yourselves*—will you be saved or not? For after all, that is a question of a great deal more importance to you. Now, the religion of Christ is not a thing that puts a man into a salvable state, but it *saves* him. It is not a religion which offers him something which *perhaps* may save him. No, it saves him out and out, on the spot. It is not a thing which says to a man, “Now I have set you a-going, you must keep on yourself.” No, it goes the whole way through, and saves him from beginning to end.

He that says, “Alpha,” never stops till He can say, “Omega,” over every soul. I say the religion of Christ—I know there are certain shadows of it which do not carry such a reality as this with them but I say that the religion of the Bible, the religion of Jesus Christ—is an absolute certainty. “Whosoever believes on Him has eternal life, and he shall never perish, neither shall he come into condemnation.” “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands.” “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”

“Well,” says one, “I should like to know what this very sure religion is.” Well, it is this—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Trust Christ with all that you have, and you shall be saved. “Well,” says one, “but when?” Why, now, here, this morning, on the spot—you shall be saved NOW. It is not a vain thing. It is not a speculation, for it is true to you *now*. The word is near you—on your lips and in your heart. If you will, with your heart, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you shall be saved, and saved now. “There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” This is a great and glorious Truth of God and it is true to-day—“Whosoever believes in Him *has* everlasting life.”

“But is it true for *me*?” asks one. My text says, “It is not a vain thing for *you*.” “Oh, it will suit other people. It will not do for me.” It will suit you, Sir—“It is not a vain thing *for you*, because it is your life.” If you have come up from the country, it is no vain thing for you, my dear Friends. If you reside in town, amidst its noise and occupations, it is not a vain thing for you, my dear Hearers. It is not a vain thing for any. If you do but lay hold of it, and it lays hold of you—if you receive the reality and vitality of it into your soul, be you who you may, it will not be a vain thing to you. Not a “perhaps,” or an “if,” or a “but,” or a “maybe,” but a “shall,” and a “will,” a Divine, an eternal, an everlasting and immutable certainty!

Whoever believes in Christ—let the earth shake, let the mountains rock, let the sun grow old with age, and the moon quench her light—whoever believes in Christ shall be saved! Unless God can change His

mind—and that is impossible. Unless God can break His word—and to say so is blasphemy. Unless Christ's blood can lose its efficacy—and that can never be. Unless the Spirit can be anything but Eternal and Omnipotent—and to suppose so were ridiculous—he that believes on Christ, must at last, before the eternal Throne, sing hallelujah to God and the Lamb.

“Well,” says one, “it is a vain thing, I'm sure, for *me*, for I'm only a poor working man. Religion, no doubt, is a very fine thing for gentlefolk but it doesn't do for a man as has to work hard, for he's something else to think on.” Well, you are just the man that I should think it would do for. Why, it is little enough you have here, my dear Friend, and that is the very reason why you should have eternal joys hereafter! If there is one man that religion can bless more than another—and I do not know that there is—it is the poor man in his humble cottage. Why, this will put sweets into your cup. This will make your little into enough, and sometimes into more than enough. You shall be rich while you are poor, and happy when others think you are miserable.

“Well,” says the rich man, “it is nothing to *me*. I do not see that it will suit me.” Why, it is the very thing *for you*, Sir. In fact, you are the man who *ought* to have it, because, see what you will have to lose when you die, unless you have religion to make up for it! What a loss it will be for you when you have to lose all your grandeur and substance! What a loss it will be for you to go from the table of Dives to the Hell of Dives! Surely it is not a vain thing *for you*.

“Well,” says another, “but I am a moral and upright person. Indeed, I do not think anybody can pull my character to pieces.” I hope nobody wants to. But this is not a vain thing for you, because, let me tell you, that fine righteousness of yours is only fine in your own esteem. If you could only see it as God sees it, you would see it to be as full of holes as ever beggars' rags were when at last they were consigned to the dust heap. I say your fine righteousness, My Lady, and yours, Sir Squire from the country, no matter though you have given to the poor and fed the hungry, and done a thousand good things—if you are relying on *them*, you are relying on rotten rags, in which God can no more accept you than He can accept the thief in his dishonesty. “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we are all as an unclean thing.” It is not a vain thing for you, then.

“Oh but I am a young man just in my teens and growing up to manhood. I think I ought to have a little pleasure.” So I think, Friend, and if you want a great deal of it, be a Christian. “Oh but I was thinking people should enjoy themselves.” So do I. I never was an advocate for making sheep without their first being lambs, and I would let the lambs skip as much as they like. But if you want to lead a happy and a joyous life, give your young days to Jesus. Who says that a Christian is miserable? Sir, you lie. I tell you to your face that you know not what Christianity is, or else you would know that Christians are the most joyous people under Heaven. Young man, I would like you to have a glorious youth. I would like you to have all the sparkle and the brilliance which your young life can give you. What have you better than to live and to enjoy yourself? But how are you to do it? Give your Creator your heart and the thing is done. It is not a vain thing for you.

“Ah,” says the old man, “but it is a vain thing for *me*. My time is over. If I had begun when I was a lad it might have done—but I am settled in my habits now. I feel sure, Sir, it is too late for me. When I hear my grandchildren say their prayers as they are going to bed, pretty dears, when they are singing their evening hymn, I wish I was a child again. But my heart has gotten hard and I cannot say, ‘Our Father,’ now. And when I do get to, ‘Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us,’ I get stuck there. I do not know how to get over that, for I have not forgiven old Jones yet who robbed me in that lawsuit. And then you know I am infirm and have rheumatism and a hundred other pains. I do not think religion will suit me.”

Well, it is just the very thing that will suit you, because it will make you young again. What? “Can a man be born again when he is old?” That is what Nicodemus asked. Yes, a man can be born again, so that the babe shall die a hundred years old. Oh, to make the autumn of your life and the coming winter of your last days into a new spring and a blessed summer—this is to be done by laying hold of Christ NOW! And then you shall feel in your old veins the young blood of the new spiritual life, and you will say, “I count the years I lived before *a death*, but now I begin to live.”

I do not know whether I have picked out every character. I am afraid I have not. But this thing I know, though you may be under there, or up in the corner yonder where my eyes cannot reach you, yet you may hear this voice and I hope you may hear it when you are gone from this house back to your country towns and to your houses—

***“It is religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live!
It is religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die.
After death its joys will be
Lasting as eternity!
Be the living God my Friend,
Then my bliss shall never end.”***

And this is the Gospel which is preached unto you. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ”—that is, trust Him—“and you shall be saved.” May God bless you for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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THE DIVINE DISCIPLINE

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***“As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.”
Deuteronomy 32:11, 12.***

MOSES in this Chapter is speaking concerning Israel in the wilderness. When the great host came out of Egypt, they were, through the debasing influences of slavery—which are not easily or quickly shaken off—not much better than a mere mob. They were not at all fitted to march at once to take possession of Canaan, nor to take part in the compacts of organized social life. Therefore God, instead of taking them by the short way along which they might have passed in a very few days, ordained it so in His Providence that they should wander about for 40 years in the wilderness—partly, it is true, as a punishment for their unbelief, but also in order that the nation might be trained and educated for its future destiny—made as fit as it could be, to be the custodian of the oracles of the Truths of God and to be the receiver of the Revelation which God intended to give to men.

If you will read carefully over the history of the children of Israel in the wilderness, I think you will see that the practical training which God adopted was—if they had been right-minded men—splendidly adapted to bring them to the very highest state of spiritual life. In some respects it was weak through their flesh, but the method, itself, was superlatively excellent. Here was a people taken away from the multitude of gods which they had been known to see on every hand in Egypt and they were taught to reverence an unseen God for whom they had no symbol whatever for some time. And afterwards, when symbolical worship in some form was ordained, yet there was still so little of symbol that Moses could say, “They saw no similitude.” They were trained to worship a *spiritual* God—in spirit and in truth. They never saw Him, but every morning they had the best testimonies of His existence, for round about the camp lay the manna like hoarfrost, or dew, upon the ground! Their feet grew not weary, neither did their garments become old all those years, and thus about their very clothes on their bodies and before them on their tables, they had constant proofs of the great God existing and caring for the sons of men. The whole of their training, while it educated and developed

their patience and their faith, had also the high purpose of teaching them gratitude and to bind them by the cords of love and the bands of a man to the service of God. It was not because the training was not wise in the highest degree, but because they were children that were corrupters and, like ourselves, an evil and stiff-necked generation, that they did not learn even when God, Himself, became their Teacher.

Now in drawing a parallel between the children of Israel and ourselves, we shall invite you to notice, first, in the text—*the Divine Instructor*, “the Lord alone did lead them.” And then *the method of instruction illustrated*—they were trained as an eagle trains the eaglet for their flight. First, then, we have—

I. A DIVINE INSTRUCTOR.

The Israelites had for their Guide, Instructor and Tutor, in order to prepare them for Canaan, none other than Jehovah, Himself! He might employ Moses and Aaron and He did also make use of those marvelous picture books, if I may so call them, of sacrifice, type and metaphor, but still, God, Himself, was their Guide and their Instructor. And it is so with us. The Holy Spirit is the teacher of the Christian Church. Although He uses this Book, of which we can never speak too highly. Although He still uses the ministry of the Word, for which we are thankful as for a candlestick which we trust may never be taken out of its place, still, our true Teacher is God the Holy Spirit. He instructs us in the Truths of God and, meanwhile, it is also God, who, in the rulings and guiding of Providence, is our Instructor if we will but learn. He is teaching us, sometimes by sweet mercies and at other times by bitter afflictions, instructing us from our cradles to our graves if we will but open our eyes to see and our ears to hear the lessons which He writes and speaks. We, alas, are often as the horse and as the mule which have no understanding—and will not be taught by the Providential teachings, but still we have God to be our Teacher—and it is none other than our heavenly Father who is daily training us for the skies. If we are, indeed, His children and can say, “Our Father, which are in Heaven,” we may also go to Him as our Teacher, believing He will, notwithstanding all our folly, make us “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

The text speaks of “the Lord alone.” Brothers and Sisters, it is well for us that in Providence we are led by “the Lord alone.” There is an overruling hand after all, notwithstanding our follies and our willfulness, so that God’s purposes are ultimately fulfilled. But I wish this were more true to our consciousness—that we are led by “the Lord alone.” I mean that we waited upon Him at every step of life. I am persuaded that the holiest of characters take more matters to God than you and I are accustomed to do. I mean they not only consult Him, as we do, upon certain great and critical occasions, but those saints who live nearest to Christ, go to Him about little matters, thinking nothing to be too trifling to speak into the ear of Christ.

Some things about which they will not even consult their kindest and wisest human friends will be matters of consultation between them and their Savior. Oh, what mistakes we would escape, what disasters we would avoid, if “the Lord alone” did guide us! And if we watched the signs of His hands in guiding us, if our eyes were to Him as the eyes of the handmaidens are to their mistress, anxious to know the Lord’s will and always saying to our own self-love, “Down, down, busy will! Down proud spirit! What would *You* have me do, my Master, for Your will shall be my will and my heart shall always give up its fondest wish when once I understand what Your will is concerning me.” Beloved, I am afraid that some strange god is often with us, even with us who are the people of God! We are united to God and He will gladly teach us—and from Him, alone, should we learn! But oftentimes we harbor idolatrous thoughts in our heart. All selfishness is idolatry! All repining against the Providence of God has in it the element of rebellion against the Most High! If I love my own will and if I desire my own way in preference to God’s way, I have made a god of my own wisdom, or my own affection—and I have not been true in my loyalty to the only living and true God, even Jehovah! Let us search, look and see if there is not some strange god with us. It may be hidden away, perhaps, and we may scarcely know it. It may be hidden, too, in that very part of us where our dearest affections dwell. Some Rachel may be sitting in the tent on the camel furniture under which the false gods are concealed! Let us, therefore, make a thorough search and then invite the Great King, Himself, to aid us. “Search me, O God, try me, and know my ways, and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

The great Truth of God which I want to bring forward, if I can, is this—that God in His Providence and in Grace, as far as we have been made willing to learn of Him, is educating us for something higher than this world! This world is the nature in which we dwell. Sometimes we who love the Lord mount up from it with wings as eagles, but we do not stay on the wing. We drop again—we cleave to earth. ‘Tis our mother and it seems as though we can never rise permanently above our kinship to it. Very powerful is it in its attraction over us. Down we go again. We have not yet learned to keep up yonder where the atmosphere is clear and where the smoke of the world’s cares will not reach us. But God is educating us for the skies! The meaning of these trials of ours, the interpretation of our sorrows is this—God is preparing us for another state, making us fit to dwell with angels and archangels and the spirits of the just made perfect! If this earth were all, then, your teachers at school, or your tutors when you passed through college, might have sufficed. But this world is but the vestibule to the next and if you know, as well as man can teach you, how to play your part here with a view only to secular advancement, you are not yet educated at all in the highest sense! God Himself must teach and train you, that you may be fit to sit among the

princes of the royal blood before His Throne and to have communion with those celestial spirits who—

**“With songs and choral symphonies
Day without night circle His throne rejoicing.”**

God is teaching you! God alone can do it and He will do it—but take care that you put away all strange gods and give yourselves up wholly to His guidance, submitting your will and your affections and all parts of your spirit and nature to His teaching so that you may be found fully ready when He shall say, “Come up here to dwell with Me forever.” Now, passing from that, we shall notice very briefly, indeed—

II. THE METHODS OF THE DIVINE INSTRUCTION.

These methods of Divine instruction are given to us under the very poetical picture of the eagle training its young ones for flight. God, to accommodate Himself to our poor understandings, sometimes compares Himself to a father with children. At other times to a mother with her little ones. Sometimes even to an animal. In this case, even to a bird of prey, so that we may but learn no depths of condescension are too great for the Great Teacher! He compares Himself here, then, to the eagle. I suppose that Moses was well acquainted with the eagle’s natural habits. He describes it, first of all, as *stirring up its nest*, as though the young birds were unwilling to stir from their pleasant home. Having from the time of their birth been quiet and happy there, they had no anxiety whatever to try the blue unfathomable oceans of the air! They had no wish to leave the rocky refuge where they had been reared. They feared, perhaps, lest they might fall over the precipices and be dashed in pieces. Therefore is it said, “The eagle stirs up her nest.” She makes it uncomfortable for the little ones so that they may be willing to leave it. And that which would have been obnoxious and burdensome to them, they may come even to desire, namely, to be out of the nest! Someone has quaintly said that the eagle puts thorns into the nest which prick the fledglings so that they are anxious to get away!

Certain it is that God does thus with those He would train for the skies. He stirs up their nest. Cannot some of you recollect times when your nests were stirred *by Providential dealings* while you were in sin? All things went well with you for a season, but you forgot God. And His Son, Jesus, had no attractions for you. But suddenly the child sickened or the wife was smitten with death, or trade separated from you, or you, yourselves, were ill, or there was a famine in the land. Then it was, when you were in need, your nest being thoroughly stirred up, that you said, “I will arise and go unto my Father.” The land of Goshen was like a nest to the Israelites. They had no desire to come out of it, but God stirred them up by means of Pharaoh, who kept them in heavy bondage, put them to making bricks and then to making bricks without straw. And then he slew their male children. In all sorts of ways they were made to cry out under the bitter yoke. We know that they loved that nest, for they often longed to be back in it. They talked of the leeks, the garlic, the onions

and the cucumbers which they did eat when they were in Egypt, so that the nest seems to have been a tolerably downy one to them at one time! But God so stirred it up that they longed to be away—and even the howling wilderness seemed a paradise compared with the house of bondage. So was it with you! You found that the world was not what it seemed to be. Troubles increased, Providential afflictions trod on each other's heels and then you turned to your God and remembered your sins. And so He stirred up your nest *by inward trouble under conviction of sin*. I know my soul's nest was once very soft. I thought I had done no great evil, that I had kept God's Commandments from my youth up. But when conviction of sin came, then I discovered my heart to be deceitful above all things and desperately wicked! Then my sins, like so many daggers, were at my heart, My soul was torn in two—I could say with gracious George Herbert—

***“My thoughts are all a case of knives,
Wounding my heart.”***

There was no rest, no peace, no joy, no comfort to be found. Well, that was God stirring up the nest! If there are any of you in that condition now—uneasy and troubled about sin, I am glad of it! Your nest is being stirred and God grant that you may fly from it and never come back to that nest again!

If all had gone smoothly with you. If sin had always been a sweet morsel to your tongue, we might despair of your ever being saved. But now you feel the smart of it, I trust it is, in order that you may be delivered from the guilt of it and led to find a Savior! Well, since that, dear Friends, how many times we have had our nests stirred up! I do not know your history, but you do, and I ask you now to look it over. Oh, you planned, and planned, and planned, and said, “Now I shall live in this house for the next 20 or 30 years, I shall live here, certainly, as long as I live anywhere.” And now you find yourselves, perhaps, 50 or a 100 miles from it. You were in the service of a certain kind man and you felt very happy in it, but the firm has broken up and where are you now? There is that dear child you have set your heart upon. You have said, “What a mercy it will be to see him growing up! What a comfort he will be to me!” He is not a comfort to you, but just the very reverse, for he is your greatest sorrow! It is God stirring up your nest. Whereas a few years ago you were in good, sound health, now the eyes begin to fail, or the ears are giving way, or there is some internal complaint, or some constant pain. Whereas years ago you were a master, you are now a servant—whereas years ago everybody looked up to you, now everybody looks down upon you! It is all the stirring up of the nest because you have no abiding city here—because you were too prone to say, “My mountain stands firm. I shall never be moved!” Therefore God has stirred up your nest and He will do it yet again and again! Between now and Heaven how many times will the nest of ours be stirred? Oh, blessed be God for it! “Moab is settled upon his lees: he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel”—and then comes a

curse upon him! Sometimes these long periods of prosperity, rest and ease are very unhealthy for us poor unworthy and sinful beings. If we were more like Jesus. If we were more pure and heavenly, we could bear prosperity, but because we are so sinful, I question if any of us can bear it long. If the Master shall give some of us outward prosperity, He will have to whip us behind the door in private to keep us right! We must have some thorn in the flesh, some secret grief—there must be some skeleton in the cupboard, some specter in some chamber of the house, or else we shall say, “Soul, take your ease, you have much goods laid up for many years”—and when we do this, we shall be modern fools like the great fool of old! But the gracious Lord will not let His people get into that state. Again and again, and yet again, against their wishes, and contrary to their expectations, He will stir their nest and they shall cry out against it. But if they did but only know the meaning of it, or could read the whole of it in the light of eternity, they would bless the hand which tears away their comforts, seeing Divine Wisdom and Infinite Affection in it all! That, then, is the first thing—God instructs His people to mount aloft by stirring up their nests.

The next picture is *the eagle fluttering over her young*. What is that for? She wants them to mount, my Brothers and Sisters! Well, then, in order to teach them to mount, she first mounts, herself—“she flutters over her young.” She moves her wings to teach them that thus they must move their wings, that thus they must mount! There is no teaching like teaching by example. We always learn a great deal more through our eyes and ears than we do merely through our ears. Those of us who cannot preach with our mouths would do well to preach with our lives—which is the very best kind of preaching. So God preaches to us. If He would have us holy, how holy He is Himself! “Be you holy for I am holy.” Would He have us generous? How generous is He! “He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all.” Would He have us forgive our enemies? How He delights in mercy, Himself! If we need a picture of perfection, where can we get it but in God? “Be you perfect even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.” God shows us His law in His holy actions, He being, Himself, the very mirror and paragon of everything that is absolutely pure and right. Above all, the Lord has been pleased to set us an example of mounting above the world in the Person and life of His own dear Son! Oh, how the eagle flutters when I look upon the Savior!—

***“Such was Your truth and such Your zeal,
Such deference to Your Father’s will,
Such love and meekness so Divine
I would transcribe and make them mine!
Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of Your prayer—
The desert Your temptations knew,
Your conflict and Your victory, too.
Be You my Pattern—make me bear
More of Your gracious Image here!*”**

***Then God the Judge shall own my name
Among the followers of the Lamb.”***

Beloved, see how our Lord Jesus this day mounts to Heaven! There He is—He has gone there that our hearts may follow Him! He fluttered to the skies that we might also follow and might rise above the world, setting our affections no longer upon the things of earth, but upon things above where Christ sits at the right hand of God! What way could there be of teaching us tenderness like the tenderness of the Savior? What method of teaching us love like the display of the love of God in Christ Jesus? Brothers and Sisters, I commend you to the picture of the eagle fluttering and thus setting an example to its little ones. You may also see before your eyes the great Incarnate God teaching you how to mount above the trials and temptations of this mortal life and living, even on earth, a celestial life!

This, however, is not all the eagle does. We read in our text that she then *spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them on her wings*. I suppose this means just this, that spreading her wings she entices her young ones to get between her wings upon her back and then she mounts and flies towards the sun. It may be fable or not, I do not know, that she flies towards the sun to teach her eaglets to bear its blaze. Then, when she has mounted to a good height, she suddenly shifts her wings and throws the young eaglets off—and there they are on their own wings! They begin to descend to earth, not able to keep themselves up, but compelled to fly—but before they fall on the rocks, she makes a swoop and comes under them and catches them on her wings again, gives them a little rest, bears them up once more, and then throws them off again, so that they must fly. But she takes care that these early trials, for which they are scarcely able, shall not end in their destruction, for again she makes another swoop and catches them between her wings once again.

This is the picture of what God does to us again. We must speak of Him after the metaphor which He, Himself, uses—He takes us up between those mighty wings and bears us as high as we dare go—and only pauses because He knows we cannot now bear more. Then, when we have had full fellowship and looked the sun in the face, and have had bright enjoyment of Heaven, as far as we could bear, He suddenly throws us off and makes us try our own wings, and alas, they are very feeble and weak, indeed. We then discover our own impotence and we think we shall fall like stars and be dashed in pieces! But lo, He comes and underneath us are the everlasting wings—and just when we thought we should surely come to destruction, we find ourselves safely sheltered between the mighty pinions of the Eternal God! Up, again, we mount, and before long we are thrown off again—cast away, as it were, for a time. His face is hidden from us, or else by some outward trial of Providence we are made to try our wings again to see whether our faith will keep us up! And by degrees it comes to pass that we learn to fly till we love flying and are

not satisfied to come back to earth anymore! We are loving to fly and often sighing and longing for the day when we shall be permitted to—

**“Stretch our wings and fly
Straight to yonder worlds of joy!”**

Do you not sometimes feel as if your wing feathers were come, my Brothers and Sisters? Surely you must sometimes feel as though your faith were growing stronger and your communion with Christ getting clearer—as though you anticipated and felt that the time must be drawing near when you could mount to dwell where Jesus is! I am thankful if such is your experience, but I should not wonder if you find that all the wing feathers which you have got will be all too few for you, for you may yet be made to have another descent from between the almighty wings and be made once again to see how great your weakness is. One other thought, however, occurs to us. There is no doubt that the idea of *security* as well as of teaching is here because when the eagle bears her young ones on her wings, if the archer, or in these modern days the hunter with his rifle should seek to destroy the eaglets, it is plain there is no reaching them without first killing the mother bird. So there is no destroying possible to the true people of God. “Greater is He that is for us, than all that can be against us.” God puts Himself between His people and the danger which threatens them—and unless the foe should be mightier than God, Himself—which is inconceivable, there is no soul that trusts in Him which shall know eternal hurt!

Oh, how glorious a thing it is to feel, when the light air is all around me and I know that if I fall I would perish, that yet I cannot fall, for God’s wings bear me up! And to feel that though there are hosts of enemies able to destroy me if they can get at me, yet they cannot, for they must first get through God, Himself, before they can get to the weak soul who hangs upon Jesus and rests alone in Him! Well did David say, “In the time of trouble He will hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me: He shall set me up upon a rock.” You know the threefold figure. The “pavilion” stood in the middle of the camp and all the armed men kept watch around the royal tent. There was no slaying the man who was hidden in the royal pavilion unless the king, himself, were destroyed! And unless Divine Sovereignty is overthrown, not one of the elect can perish! Then, again, there was “the secret of the tabernacle.” That was the Most Holy Place into which no one entered but the high priest once a year! And there God said He would put His child, so that they must first break through and dare the very Shekinah and come before the brightness, the destroying brightness, of Jehovah’s face, before they can reach the soul that trusts in the Mercy Seat on which the blood was sprinkled! Then there is the third figure—“He shall set me up upon a rock”—so that the rock, itself, must shake—the Immutability of God, itself, must cease to be and God’s everlastingness must die before it shall be possible for a soul to perish that rests in Him! The eagle takes up the

eaglets on her wings and bears them—and so in this way does God lead, train and guide us for the skies!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I shall not detain you longer, except to say that if God is training you for the skies—oh, *let your hearts go up*. Grovel not below—

***“Go up, go up, my Heart,
Dwell with your God above!
For here you cannot rest,
Nor here give out your love
Go up, go up, my Heart,
Be not a trifler here—
Ascend above these clouds,
Dwell in a higher sphere!
Let not your love flow out
To things so soiled and dim—
Go up to Heaven and God,
Take up your love to Him!
Waste not your precious stores
On creature love below—
To God that wealth belongs,
On Him that wealth bestow.”***

You are a stranger here. If you are God’s child, then you are a citizen of another country! Are there any bands to bind you here? I thought He had broken them. Have you never said—

***“The bands that bind my soul to earth
Are broken by His hand—
Before His Cross I find myself
A stranger in the land.”***

Are there loved ones to bind you here?—

***“Your Best-Beloved keeps His Throne
On hills of light in worlds unknown.”***

All the love you dare to give to all below, if you are true to Christ, can be as nothing compared with the love which you give to Him! Do you not feel your soul now drawn towards Him? At least if you cannot fly on the wings of confidence, fly on the wings of desire! A sigh will mount to Him, or He will come down to it! Only be not fond of this world. Do not let this thick clay cleave to you. You are not earth-born now—you are born from above! This corruptible world must not claim you, for you are born-again of incorruptible seed! You are not this world’s property. You are bought with a price by Him who prays for you that you may be with Him where He is and behold His Glory. I am ashamed of myself that I who talk thus with you should so often grovel here. But this one thing I must say—I am never happy except when my soul is up with my Lord. I know enough of this to acknowledge that it is my misery to feed upon the ashes of this world, to lie among the pots, to serve the brick-kilns of this Egypt! There can be no peace between my soul and this world. Oh, I know this, for this painted Jezebel has mocked me too often and she has become so ugly in my esteem that I cannot endure her! But yet—what shall we say of

our nature?—We go back again to the Marah, which was bitter for us to drink and try to drink from it again! And the broken cisterns which held no water before, we fly to again and again! Oh, for more wisdom! The Master has taught us and He has been so long a time with us, but we have not known Him. Yet may He have patience with us until He has taught us to mount above the world and dwell where He is!

Ah, dear Friends, there are some of you to whom I cannot talk in this fashion because you cannot mount. You have nowhere to mount to! Oh, may the Master stir up your nests! I pray that He may put the thorns of conscience into your pillows tonight. May you recollect those sins which God hates and which God will punish—and if you do remember them and feel bowed down under their weight—then remember that there is one who can help you and who *will* help you, even the Lord Jesus Christ! Look to Him in the hour of trouble and He will be your Deliverer! May the Lord bless these thoughts to all our souls for Jesus' sake.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
DEUTERONOMY 29:1-21.**

Verse 1. *These are the words of the Covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the Covenant which He made with them in Horeb.* That is the preamble, just as in legal documents there is usually some statement of the purport and intent of the indenture before the matter is proceeded with. These Covenants with God are solemn things and, therefore, they are given in a formal manner to strike attention and command our serious thoughts.

2-4. *And Moses called unto all Israel and said unto them, You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; the great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles: yet the LORD has not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.* You saw all that and yet did not see it—you saw the external work, but the internal lesson you did not perceive. A very mournful statement to make, but God's servants are not sent to flatter man but to speak the truth—however painful the speaking of it may be.

5, 6. *And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes have not worn out upon you, and your shoe did not wear out upon your foot. You have not eaten bread, neither have you drunk wine or strong drink: that you might know that I am the LORD your God.* Either there had been means of frequent renewal of their garments, or else by a miracle these garments had never worn out! And the very shoes that they put upon their feet on the Passover night were still on their feet—if not the same, yet still they were shod, though they trod the weary wilderness which well might have worn them till they were bare. “You have not eaten bread, neither have you drunk wine or strong drink”—a nation of total

abstainers for forty years! There was no bread in the wilderness for them and there was no wine. It may have been obtained as a great luxury, as it probably was, for we have reason to believe that Nadab and Abihu were slain by fire before the Lord because they were drunk when they offered strange fire—but taking the whole people around, anything like wine had not crossed their lips for forty years, yet there they were, strong and healthy! “That you may know that I am Jehovah your God.”

7. *And when you came unto this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, came out against us unto battle, and we smote them.* People not used to war, either, and feeble folk! Yet they smote the great kings and slew mighty kings, for the Lord was with them!

8, 9. *And we took their land, and gave it for an inheritance unto the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to the half tribe of Manasseh. Keep therefore the words of this Covenant, and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do.* This, then, was the Covenant made with the nation—that God would be their God and He would prosper them. As He had done, so would He do—He would be their protector, defender, strength and crown and joy.

10, 11. *You stand this day, all of you, before the LORD your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and your stranger that is in your camp, from the hewer of your wood unto the drawer of your water.* This National Covenant embraced all the great men, the captains, the wise men, all that were in authority, “your elders, and your officers.” It took in all their children, for it was a Covenant according to the flesh—and their children according to the flesh are included. “Your wives,” too, for in this matter there was no sex. “The stranger also.” Here we poor Gentiles get a glimpse of comfort, even though from that old Covenant we seem to be shut out. “Your stranger that is in your camp” is included. And the poorest and those that performed the most menial service were all to be made partakers of this Covenant, “from the hewer of your wood unto the drawer of your water.”

12-15. *That you should enter into Covenant with the LORD your God, and into His oath, which the LORD your God makes with you this day: that He may establish you today for a people unto Himself, and that He may be unto you a God, as He has said unto you, and as He has sworn unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. Neither with you only do I make this Covenant and this oath; but with him that stands here with us this day before the LORD our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day.* With the sick that were at home, with the generations that were not yet born, for this was intended to be a National Covenant in perpetuity to their children and their children’s children to the end of time. Had they kept it so would it have stood!

16, 17. *(For you know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt and how we came through the nations which you passed by, and you have*

seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them). Now you have seen how they worshipped idols. You have seen what you must avoid—you have beheld their folly that you may escape from it.

18. *Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turns away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that bears gall and wormwood.* For the worship of false gods is the cause of untold mischief and evil—wherever it is found it is a root that bears gall and wormwood—and God would not have it in a single individual, man nor woman, no, not in a single family or tribe!

19. *And so it may not happen, when he hears the words of this curse, that he blesses himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.* For there were some who so hardened themselves against God that they said, “We shall have peace! Let us do what we like—let us worship these idol gods more and more and more—let us add drunkenness and idolatry to our thirst.”

20. *The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and His jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him.* Not light upon him, but lie upon him—rest there and stay there!

20, 21. *And the LORD shall blot out his name from under Heaven. And the LORD shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel.* As a huntsman separates a stag from the herd that he may hunt it all day, so shall God with any idolater that should come among His people with whom He made a Covenant that day. Oh, how God hates that anything should be worshipped by us but Himself! How indignant is He if anywhere, anything takes the supreme place in the human heart which ought to be occupied by God alone!

—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.**

BY THE FOUNTAIN

NO. 2113

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 3, 1889,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well;
whose branches run over the wall.”
Genesis 49:22.*

*“And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things
of Heaven, for the dew and for the deep that couches beneath”
Deuteronomy 32:13.*

DEAR friends, we long to have many converts. We count that Church happy to which God adds daily of such as are being saved. But we are very much concerned about the quality of our converts. We do not wish to make up a Church with a number of shallow professors, whose religion lies upon the surface, and is of a doubtful character. We are very anxious that we should have those in our fellowship who are thoroughly converted, richly experienced and fully instructed in the deep things of God.

We would have as our associates people who are established by principle rather than moved by passion. We would earnestly pray to have a company of Believers added to the Church who shall be like Joseph in character—fruitful trees growing by the well, whose branches ran over the wall. Jacob describes Joseph as a fruitful offshoot and he explains his fruitfulness by his position—he is fruitful “by a well.” When a vine grows near a well which is always full, and when it is able to send its roots down to drink of the unfailing spring, it may very well be fruitful and send forth many branches.

The point is, to get by the well. Or, to use our second text, to tap “the deep that couches beneath.” If we can reach the secret fountains and say to God, with the Psalmist, “All my fresh springs are in You,” then shall we find nourishment for our branches and our fruit and leaf will never fail. “Dwell deep” is a prophetic word of much value to Christians. To live upon land-drainage and casual rains may suffice for ordinary plants. But the trees of the Lord which bring forth much fruit need to penetrate below the topsoil and reach the secret fountains of Divine Grace.

Upon that subject I am going to talk this morning. Our desire is that we may each one of us abide in Christ Jesus and be in constant fellowship with the Father through the Holy Spirit, so that we may, in very truth, be rooted by the well and may drink from “the deep that lies under.” We would be grounded and settled by living and lasting union and commun-

ion with the Eternal God. We would know the secret of the hidden life and be filled with its fundamental principles, its constraining influences, its spiritual powers. We would drink in such supplies, by secret contact with God, that our outward life would bear ample testimony to our private communion with Heaven.

May the Holy Spirit graciously aid us in our meditations while we first notice that this figure describes Joseph's character—he was all that Jacob styled him. Secondly, that this in itself was a great blessing, for it was used as such by Moses in after years. And thirdly, that it brings with it many other choice favors.

I. First, THIS DESCRIBES JOSEPH'S CHARACTER. He flourished near to God. He was an offshoot of the old tree and he was rooted deep by a well which always watered him. From his childhood until he died, the main point in Joseph's character was that he was in clear and constant fellowship with God—and therefore God blessed him greatly. He lived *to* God and was God's servant. He lived *with* God and was God's child. He looked up to Heaven for daily teaching and comfort. And God was with him so as not only to bless him but to bless others for his sake—as, for instance, the house of Potiphar, first—and afterwards Pharaoh, and all the land of Egypt, and all the famishing nations.

In this respect his branches ran over the wall in scattering blessings far and wide—and all this was the result of living in constant communion with God. My dear Hearer, you profess to be a Christian, but have you really had dealings with God? I know you have been baptized and you come to the communion table. But have you pressed beyond the *signs* to the Lord Himself? Is there a root in your religion, and has that root struck deep into spiritual Truth? And have you received the life and power which come from the spiritual Fountain? Can you say with David, "My soul, wait you only upon God. For my expectation is from Him"?

The first blessing in the Book of Psalms is that the godly man should be, "like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither. And whatever he does shall prosper." The great matter is being rooted by the *Well*—the drawing of supplies from the eternal storehouse of Christ Jesus the Lord—in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell.

How can we fail to be fruitful if we draw our life and all its vigor from the Lord Jesus?

Because Joseph lived near to God, he received and retained gracious principles. There is a great difference between religious principle and religious passion. Many persons are religious by starts and fits—according to their company, their feelings, or their whims. According to the influences under which they come, certain people become good, bad, or indifferent. But when a man lives in the Presence of the Lord, he has fixed principles

which rule his heart and guide his life. He fears God, not because others fear Him, but because God is “to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him.”

He believes the revealed Truths of God, not because others believe them, but because he is sure that the Lord has spoken them, and therefore he knows them to be true. If anybody denies the faith, he stands up to it, for it is precious to his heart. His moral conduct and his spiritual life are upright, true, sincere and reverent—not because of the prejudices of education, or the force of example—but because the Lord has placed within him a new heart and a right spirit. He does not resort to another man’s religious cistern. For there is within him “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

He discerns between the Truth of God and error. For he has learned the Gospel for himself by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. He follows after holiness because he walks with the God of Holiness and the Law of the Lord is written upon the tablets of his heart. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus he receives by the witness of the Spirit. It is true to him, whether others receive it or reject it—he could part with anything and everything sooner than quit his hold upon the everlasting Truth of God. This it is to be a tree by a well, to have a religion based upon principles, to live by vital contact with the Lord.

Many nowadays belong to this denomination or to that by pure accident of birth or position. They have never weighed their opinions in the balances of Scripture. Indeed, many have no idea what their principles are. We have Protestants nowadays who never protest against anything and Nonconformists who conform to everything which is in fashion. All this is bad. Ignorance in reference to Divine Truth is a very fruitful evil. We need an instructed people, if we are to have a fruitful people. Unless we get hold

upon the Truth of God by the right hand of clear apprehension and hold it as our heart’s treasure, we shall neither know the joy of it in days of calm, nor be held by it in nights of storm.

From where came martyrs in times of persecution, but from those who were in living union with God? From where shall come bold confessors in these apostatizing days, if not from among persons of like character? Unless we get men and women into the Church who, like Joseph, take root in the deep Truth of God’s Word, we shall never see the Church in full health and glory.

Joseph showed his character throughout the whole of his life. As a child, his father loved him, as our translators say, “because he was the son of his old age.” It would be better to understand the words as meaning, because he was a son of old age. He was old and wise in his ways. He was a youth of great thoughtfulness and his thoughts were much with

God. You may judge your waking thoughts by those which come to you in your dreams.

Joseph had dreams at night from God, because in the day he thought of God. No doubt they were supernatural and prophetic dreams. But I now speak after the manner of men—a dream is often the reflection of the wakeful thought. Joseph, as a youth, dwelt very near to God, and therefore he was forced to enter his protest against the evil conduct of his brothers. “Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.” Soon he became a marked young man—his brothers felt he was not one of themselves and they hated him—called him a dreamer—and took the first occasion to get rid of him.

Jacob’s household was in a very sad condition—even the grossest vice was found among his sons. And young Joseph was a speckled bird among them. By their malice he was sold for a slave into Egypt. But no sooner is he there, than we read, “And the Lord was with Joseph.” Potiphar bought him but the Lord made all that he did to prosper. It is difficult for a slave to become the steward of a great man. But Joseph did so. His master took no account of anything—he left it all absolutely in Joseph’s hands and God blessed the house for Joseph’s sake.

And then there came in his way that great temptation. And you remember his gracious answer, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” God was evidently with him, keeping him in the way of innocence—he could not grieve his God, for his God was his delight. By false accusation he was cast into prison. But we read that “the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.” Soon he became the under-jailer and was helpful to the prisoners. His branches were always running over the wall in the form of usefulness to others.

The prison was brightened by his presence. And as soon as he was prepared for the position, a straight path was opened for him from the prison to the court of Pharaoh. In the hour of his elevation he did not forget God. When about to interpret the royal dreams, he said, “God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.” He is a young man greatly gifted, and he may miss preferment if he mentions his religion—but this does not daunt him—again and again he says, “God has showed Pharaoh what He is about to do.” On the throne his God is still with him and guides him in all things and he exclaims, “God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

When he sees his aged father, their talk is concerning the Lord God. When he comes to die, he says to his Brethren, “I die but God will be with you.” He gave commandment concerning his bones, that he should not be buried in Egypt, for he was no Egyptian, though he had been lord of the land. He would be carried away to the land of promise in the day when Is-

rael should quit the stranger's land. Always the Lord his God is the star of Joseph. This is his character—he is in the fear of God all day long.

He was a fruitful bough by a well and that well was his God. This abiding near to God made Joseph independent of externals. His resources were within, and therefore he was not to be injured by things without. His springs were deep, and therefore not affected by circumstances.

He was not dependent upon family surroundings. At home, the society of his father would nourish his early piety but he was just as gracious in the house of Potiphar. The degrading idolatries of Egypt did not make him unfaithful to the unseen God. Some of you young people not only owe your religious impressions to your parents, but I fear that if you were removed from them you would have no religion of your own. Are my fears correct? It is an anxious time when a lad leaves his home to be apprenticed, or to take his first place. If he has nothing but borrowed religion, he will soon yield to ill company. But if he lives in God, for himself, he will stand.

If he has lived upon his parents as a mistletoe lives on the oak, it will be bad for him. But if he has root in himself and has lived upon God, all will be well. Hereditary religion is hopeful when it is also personal religion, but not else. If you are not living in God on your own account, your religion may as well fail you at once. For it will ultimately do so.

Many professing Christians are, I fear, very much dependent upon revival excitement and the currents of godly society, which are often sufficiently strong to bear with them those who have no living principle. If religion seems to prosper, if many press into the congregation, if large numbers throng the inquiry room, these people are very happy and very earnest. But after the summer-tide is over, where are they? This is the great burden which every earnest Evangelist has to bear—so many seem born for God in the heat of a revival who, nevertheless, die away when the warmth of zeal is gone.

Oh, that you, my Brethren, may be planted by a well, so that you may never be dried up by drought! Bless God for revivals and never speak against them. But do not live upon them, nor cause your spiritual health to depend upon them. Those who grow upon hotbeds will not be far from dung. There are evil tendencies connected with fanaticism which are to be dreaded. Get down to the well and let your roots drink up the fresh nourishment, which is essential to the sap of your life and to the fruit of your usefulness. Touching the cool spring, you will know where you are when others are so carried away as not to know what they hear or do.

Say to yourselves, each one of you, "I want Christ in my own heart. I want the love of God shed abroad in my own soul. I want not only to talk about heavenly things, but to *know* and *experience* them. I desire to be possessed by the Spirit of Truth and to know His power." Be not content

to live by the casual shower, or by the artificial watering-pot of special means, or by the mechanical irrigation of routine. But send down the roots of your being into the deep things of God till you tap the great deep of Divine all-sufficiency.

Beloved Friend, I pray you will seek after a spiritual life which is never dependent on outward ordinances. It is a great comfort to be able to hear the Word faithfully preached. And if you hear it, but do not hear it, you miss a great blessing and incur grievous loss. But suppose you are placed where there is no preaching of the Word? Then it will be a happy circumstance if your godliness can survive such a deprivation.

If you were away on some cattle ranch in South America, far from all religious worship—it would be a grand thing to be able to go to your Bible and to your knees and draw near to God alone—and so grow strong enough to send your branches over the wall, by blessing others and beginning to teach or preach for Christ. This is the true way in which vigorous life shows itself. I know that the Lord's Supper is a sacred ordinance and I would have you come to the Lord's Table as often as you can, for He has said, "This do in remembrance of Me."

But if it shall come to pass that you are where no Christian person is near with whom you could break bread—may you have Divine Grace to feed on Jesus Himself! When the tokens of His flesh and blood are denied you, may you be driven to Jesus Himself! Spiritual life loves the outward ordinances, but if it is deprived of them, it survives their absence. For in very deed, heavenly life draws its food from Heaven. Get to God. Oh, get to God through Jesus Christ! An hour's communion with Him means renewed life. Surely, the cluster of Eshcol must have grown near waters which were ever running. If you would glorify God, live upon God.

I believe—and I am very sorry to have to say it—that a great many nominal Christians live very much upon the minister. I have seen it to be so beyond all question. I have noticed a Church flourish and increase while a certain good man has lived and preached. But when that servant of God has departed, then they have grown cold and have been thinned out and sadly scattered. The weaker sort were drawn and held together by the good man's preaching. And as they cannot hear him, they will hear no one else, and their seats are empty. May this calamity never happen to this congregation. And yet I fear it would be so with many.

In the days of the Judges, the people seemed wonderfully good while the judge lived. But as soon as he was gone they wandered after idols. O my beloved People, may you become so indoctrinated with the Truth of God that you will never leave it! Be it your resolve that you will never hear anything but the Gospel. Love Christ so well that you will never follow any pretended shepherd who would lead you away from Him. Keep to Christ and Him crucified and live on the Doctrines of Grace when your present

leader lies asleep in his grave. Keep to the great Lord of love, whoever the preacher may be. Let it be seen that you have struck your roots too deep, and are fed by supplies too permanent, for you to be dependent upon any man—however much esteemed that man may be.

Above all, it is a great blessing to be so rooted and watered that you can live graciously and uprightly, despite personal interest. There was a time when it seemed the loss of everything for Joseph to keep close to God. A young man can get on well with elder brothers if he will please them by dropping into their habits. But if he opposes them, he will have a sorry time of it. “Joseph, if you want to be happy with Reuben and Simeon and Levi, you must hold your tongue when you see them making free in their morals, or you will bring a hornets’ nest about your head.”

If you would be happy at home, you must remember the old proverb, that when you are at Rome you must do as Rome does. This is the wisdom of this world. But Joseph scorns it. No, he cannot help it. He must abide with God and with holiness. What is the result? The Ishmaelites carry him away for a slave. Poor encouragement this for holy youth! In the house of Potiphar, compliance with his mistress seemed an easy way to honor and pleasure. But he could not yield to her base suggestion. He had rather bear the consequences of her hate. She falsely charges him. He comes under his master’s anger, loses his place and is put in prison. But he cannot help it, he must obey his God.

Are you of this true kind? Many will gladly walk with Christ when He wears silver sandals and a golden girdle. But if He walks barefoot through the mire, they seek other company. Oh, for that godliness which will strengthen you to quit your situation, to lose your wealth, to sacrifice your credit, and to part with your friends sooner than grieve your Lord! Oh, that you may never be unstable as water. For, if so, you will not excel! Your bow will only abide in strength if, like Joseph, the arms of your hands are made strong by the mighty God of Jacob.

You must draw your soul’s nourishment from secret fountains and wait upon the Lord where no eye sees you, or you will soon prove barren and unfruitful. To follow your Savior wherever He goes, you must daily derive your life from Him. I cannot close this first head without saying that while Joseph thus was placed in a position of very high independence of all outward things, he was very conscious of his entire dependence upon God. Take the well away and where was the fruitful bough? Remove “the deep that lies under,” and then the resources even of so great a character as that of the Prime Minister of Egypt would have been dried up.

We can stand alone with God. But we fall without Him—we can bear the brunt of the battle without a friend or an armor-bearer—but if the Lord does not cover our head we are undone. Like Samson, we can slay the Philistines—

***“But if the Lord is once withdrawn,
And we attempt the work alone,
When new temptations spring and rise,
We find how great our weakness is.”***

Dear young Friends, I exhort you to think for yourselves, and judge for yourselves, and act for yourselves with a holy independence of others. Yet never forget where your strength lies and never rely upon yourselves.

Never resolve to do anything apart from the Lord. Never say, “I am sufficient,” but always, in conscious insufficiency, fall back upon that Divine Grace which never fails. Self is a mocker, pride is raging and whoever is deceived thereby is not wise. All your usefulness and all your faithfulness will come to an end unless you fix your entire dependence upon Jehovah, the Beginning and the End of all that is good. Keep by the deep Well of boundless love. Draw from the Fountain of all-sufficiency and may the Lord bless you from now on and forever!

II. This brings me now to notice, under my second head, that THIS IS OF ITSELF A GREAT BLESSING. Moses, in my second text, mentions “the deep that couches beneath,” as having its own form of blessing. This was for Joseph’s race a blessing. It is a high favor to know the deep things of God, and to enjoy the far-down securities, enjoyments, and privileges of the children of Heaven.

In deep union to God are to be found the very truth and life of godliness. As for outward religion, what is it? You may practice all the ordinances without fault, and yet you will be godless unless your spirit has had converse with the Lord. A good man in Scripture is said to be a *godly* man. He is a man of God—God’s man—he lives for God, he lives with God, he lives on God. If you do not believe in God, love God, glorify God—all the outward forms on earth, all the rites that God has given—cannot make up a religion for you that is worth a single penny.

You may be orthodox in creed, as I hope you will be. But unless you really grasp and apprehend the things of orthodoxy and so come to the God of Truth and the Holy Spirit of Truth, you have a set of words and nothing more. A man may possess the catalogue of a library and yet be without a book. And so may you know a list of doctrines and yet be a stranger to the Truth of God. You may have in your hand a map of a fine estate and a list of all the treasures in the mansion—yet you may not have a place where to set your foot. A knowledge of the technicalities of theology is of small use unless you enjoy the Truths of God to which they refer. You must know the Lord and abide in Christ.

Do not say, “I have joined the Church, Sir, and attend the Prayer Meetings, and take my share among the workers.” Yes, I know. But true religion is more than this. It is repentance towards God. It is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. “Dear Sir,” cries one, “I

accept what you say. And dispute none of your teaching.” That may be. But this does not content me. If you receive my teaching as the Truth of God, I am sorry. I desire you to receive it as the Word of God. Go to the Bible for yourself. Seek to be taught by the Spirit of God. Ask to have the Truth of God written upon your heart by the Holy Spirit. You have not received the Truth of God rightly unless it comes to you with power as the Word of the living God.

When a man like Joseph can be compared to a fruitful tree by a well because he is rooted in fellowship with God, he has the blessedness of drawing his supplies from secret but real, sources. His life is hid and the support of his life is hidden, too. The world knows him not. But the secret of the Lord is with him. There is the tree, and there is the fruit—these can be seen by all. But none can see the *roots* which are the cause of the clusters, nor the deep that lies under, from which those roots derive their supply. God’s hidden Ones are a wonder unto many. Oh, to dwell with Him who is invisible and so to become ourselves partakers of an unseen life!

The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. Oh, to have eternal life and to be heirs of an eternal heritage! It is a great thing to cultivate the inner life, for it is the true life. But unless a man dwells with God in secret, he forgets the inward life—he is so taken up with washing the outside of the cup and the platter, that his inward part remains very wickedness. This will never do, for the Lord looks at the *heart*. We must see to the *inward*. And we shall fail to do so unless we abide near to God.

The supplies of such a man are inexhaustible. The well is not drawn dry, and the deep that lies under is never emptied. Plants dependent upon irrigation may pine in the drought of summer. But a tree that strikes its roots into the well does not see when heat comes but its leaf is green. It can never exhaust the great fountains. It may drink on and on and yet never diminish its supplies. “God all-sufficient” is a glorious name. Infinite mercy is a storehouse for a starving world. The Lord’s own word is, “My grace is sufficient for you.”

The man who dwells near to God has supplies which can never be cut off. We have heard of cities which have been surrounded by armies and were never captured by assault but were compelled to surrender because the besiegers cut off the water supply—broke down the aqueducts—and so subdued them by thirst. Jerusalem was never thus captured, for there were deep wells within the city itself which never ceased to flow. Ah, my Brethren, he that has a well of living water within him is beyond the enemy’s power!

We can go to God when we are not allowed to go to the service. The priest took away the boy’s Bible. “Yes,” said the child, “but you cannot

take away those twelve chapters of John which I have learned.” The malice of man may deny us a place of worship, but it cannot prevent our worshipping the Lord, wherever we may be. Every means of Divine Grace may be denied the Believer, but the Grace of the means will still come to him. God grant that neither sickness, nor traveling, nor watching at the bedside may keep us away from the assembly of His people. But if ever it should so happen, may we then so dwell in God that the upper springs may flow freely and feed the very roots of our spirit!

Supplies gained by nearness to God Himself are constant. Grace is not intermittent. It is not a land spring, but a well. Joseph had Divine Grace as an old man, even as he had it as a youth. A religion that ebbs and flows is a poor thing. We should desire the constancy of the sun and not the changing of the moon. We may have Grace day by day, every day and all day. If yours is a spring from off the deep that lies under, it will be so. I do not say that your root can always take in the same measure of water from the well of life. But I do say that it will always be there for you to take. And I think, also, that to a large extent, you will be able to partake of it with constancy.

Your root will be always in the well and so you may always drink to the full. It is wonderful how trees will grow if planted close by abundant water. I hope to see, before long, a palm which was planted in my presence some years ago. It was one of a number of palms which make a long line in a friend’s garden. They were all of one size when I saw them brought from the nursery, and the next year they all seemed pretty much upon an equality. But very soon this particular palm outstripped its fellows, and now it towers high above all the rest, till you might suppose it to be many years older.

My very good friend, the owner of the garden, said to me, “You know why this palm has so far outgrown the rest? It has sent its roots down below, into that large reservoir and so its life is powerful.” The Arabs say that the palm tree loves to have its roots in the water and its head in the fire—it would have a flowing river below and the burning sun above. Ah, Beloved, may we also grow as the palm tree! And if we get our roots down into the Divine fountains and can sun ourselves in the love of the Lord, we shall grow rapidly and surely.

The supplies of the Believer who dwells deep are pure, as well as full. Grace through the means is apt to be diluted. But when we receive it from God alone, it is Grace, indeed. The best of pipes are apt to mar the water’s taste. All common watercourses mix earth with the water. But “the deep that lies under” is out of reach of defilement. If you can draw from the pure well of the undefiled Gospel, you will do well. Among the Alps how often have I wished to drink! And the guide has forbidden me and told me to wait a little. And then we have come to a leaping fount, most cool and de-

licious—far better than the streams which, as they ran along, had gathered earth, and decay and evil life.

Did you ever know a stream in England that ran for half a mile without someone turning it into a sewer? And so it would seem at this time, as if God's own Truth could not be found in the teachings of the pulpit—pure and undefiled as given forth in Scripture by His Spirit. Do we not fear, lest with all our care, we should tincture the infallible Revelation with our thoughts? O Believer, go at once to your God for teaching! Again I remind you of David's words—"My soul, wait you only upon God. For my expectation is from Him."

Draw your supplies at first hand. Do as he did who had been made ill with impure milk—he kept a cow of his own. Instead of expositors, read the Bible for yourself. In Bible light the Bible is best seen. If the human water pot fails, it will not matter if you are "a fruitful bough by a well."

III. Lastly, I would remind you that THIS BRINGS WITH IT OTHER BLESSINGS. If you are by the well, sending your roots into its waters, you will obtain fruitfulness. A fruitful tree is one which is well sustained at the root. Dear Friends, it is by no means wisdom to cry, "I will work hard and try to bear fruit." Fruit is not produced by *work*. No vine toils to produce grapes. It buds and blossoms and bears fruit in the order of its *nature*.

We have a great deal of fruitless working nowadays. Religion is pumped up. Devotion is too often mechanical. Godliness is supplanted by artificial excitement. And love to God by perpetual fussiness. Zeal for God is counterfeited by "much ado about nothing." If the inner, secret life, is in good order, precious fruit is brought forth both by sun and moon. The gardener never says, "It is time for me to go and work a hundredweight of grapes out of my vine." Oh dear, no! Beginning early in the year he spies a shoot, and by-and-by there is a tiny flower. And then leaves appear and so on, in regular order—and only at last can he hope to gather the rich cluster from the vine.

There is no noise in the production of the vintage. You never heard a vine groaning, nor saw it sweating, nor noticed it straining a single shoot. If vines get their roots down into good soil, they bring forth fruit, as it were, naturally. May the Lord make us bring forth holiness through the force of the new nature! May He put into us immortal principles and may He sustain them by His own Personal power! And then, naturally and joyfully, in its season, we shall bring forth fruit to His praise and glory, by His Grace.

The next blessing that came with this was unselfishness. Joseph was a bough whose "branches ran over the wall." He extended his influence beyond his own family. We shall bear but little fruit if our branches are kept within the narrow space of self and relatives. Cultivate godliness for the sole sake of yourself and you will never be very godly. But abound in it for

God's sake, and for love of those whom Jesus has redeemed, and you will be godly, indeed. Live to love. For to love is to live when the love is set upon God. You should go over the wall to your ungodly neighbor, to the infidel without Christ, to the heathen and the castaway. You should extend your usefulness where none expected it to grow. Then you will be a blessing to many who were far off from you and your God.

I heard of one whose last petition was that God would bury his influence with him. An awful prayer! It was good only so far that it evidenced a recognition of his life's mistake and some sort of repentance for it. But he was asking for that which could not be granted. For not even God Himself ever kills a man's influence. The world's poet truly says, "The evil that men do lives after them." Most surely the evil lives, even if the good expires. Yet, when we are dead and buried, if we have lived *unto* God and lived *upon* God, our branches will run over the wall of the cemetery and our voices will be heard from amid the silence of the sepulcher. Is it not written, "He being dead yet speaks"?

A third blessing that comes with this is fixedness. A fruitful tree by a well, sending its roots down to the water, is well-rooted and cannot be torn from its place. It would not be fruitful if it were not stable. If a tree has no living root, you may pull it up, if you please. But if it is living and growing and drawing up its nutriment from the depth, its roots will furnish it with mighty anchorage. Can you stir a man who has once received into his heart the doctrine of the atoning sacrifice? Not if he has found in it a refuge for despair.

The logician may prove that the death of Christ did not mean Substitution and Propitiation. A fig for his logic—"we have received the Atonement," and know better. The Doctrines of Grace which I have preached to you, have a hold upon the heart and intellect, like that of certain colors when the wool is dyed ingrain. But when these doctrines have not been sufficiently preached, people are easily carried away with every wind of doctrine. Brethren, the old evangelical doctrine of Luther and Calvin had about it power to create enthusiasm. See how the Huguenots mustered to a sermon when it was death to hear a reformed preacher!

Geneva sent forth men who could gather crowds in regions crimsoned with the blood of their Brethren. Why did the multitudes come together? Would any man jeopardize his life to hear a "modern-thought" sermon? My Brethren, there is something in the old Gospel worth hearing—there is an Election of Grace most precious, a Redemption which *really* redeemed and a work of Divine Grace within which assures Final Perseverance and eternal Glory. The wish-wash of today's preaching would have gained the preacher in "the desert" no congregation. But when untold treasures are displayed, saints will come to hear of them.

That Truth of God, which is a matter of life and death to you, will take hold of your heart and soul and you will never part with it. I long to see a race of real men who will know the Truth and believe it in real fashion—men who have received a kingdom which cannot be moved—palaces of God whose foundations are in the rock.

Another privilege of personal nearness to God—such men enjoy *safety*. Hear how Jacob puts it—“The archers have sorely grieved him and shot at him and hated him.” If you live near to God you will be the target of the ungodly, and the hatred of the world will cause you grief of heart. It cannot be avoided, for the seed of the serpent will nibble at the heel of the seed of the woman. Even to this day is Joseph sold into Egypt and separated from his Brethren—

***“No slacker grows the fight,
No feebler is the foe.”***

Keep close to God and His Word and you will be counted a Nazarene among your Brethren. But this shall not harm you. For it is added, “His bow abode in strength and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.” Deriving his strength from God, Joseph lived above the rage of men. He who keeps His people neither slumbers nor sleeps. Only live upon God—let your expectations be from God only—and you cannot be overcome of adversaries.

They that trust in princes will find them fickle. They that rely upon the multitude will find them lighter than vanity. But they that trust in the Lord shall not be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end. Therefore, strike deep and draw your life from the well. Besides that, Joseph received enrichment. Notice how Moses puts it—he mentions quite a treasury of jewels. The best pearls come out of deep seas. He mentions the precious things of Heaven, the precious fruit brought forth by the sun, the precious things put forth by the moon, the chief things of the ancient mountains, the precious things of the earth—and the fullness thereof—and the goodwill of him that dwelt in the bush.

All these blessings came upon the top of the head of him who was a fruitful bough by a well. Many of you religious people know nothing about precious things. Many professors live on the mere skins and husks of Divine Truth. They have never tasted the sweet kernels. A little religion is a mournful thing—they that drink deep get down to the sweetness. Many people have religion enough to make them wretched. If they had seven times as much, they would be joyful. The restraints and duties and formalities of religion have in them none of the fat things full of marrow, nor of the wines on the lees well refined.

The best wines in God’s House are in the cellar. Those who never go downstairs have no idea of the secret sweetness. A deep experience is a precious experience. The Lord fills certain of His people with pain and

grief, that they may know His choicer consolations. We are too apt to let our roots run along just under the surface and so we get no firm footage. But trouble comes and then we grow downward, rooted in humility. *Then* we pierce the treasures of darkness and know the deep things of God. If you want a rich Christian, find a man who lives with God in secret and goes deep into Divine Truth.

A shallow Believer is a poor and weak Believer. But the strong Christian is the man who lives on God and will not be put off with anything short of fellowship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This benediction, with which we close our public service, should be the perpetual benediction of every day. Dear Friends, I might add a thousand things but I will not. I will only say this—do, I pray you, dive into the depths. You that are beginning with holy things, begin deep and take sure root. See how soon buildings fall if they have insufficient foundations! Find your foundation in the Rock.

You that have long known the Lord, endeavor to know more and more of Him. Send out more roots into yet deeper and richer ground. Get more nearly to the very heart of God. In an evil time like this, take firm hold. You cannot overcome the drift of an ill current unless you let down your anchor. Yes, and at such a time you may be unusually careful and let down four anchors from the stern, as well as the one in the proper place. We need to be anchored stem and stern in these days. We need to be held to Christ by hooks of steel. Heart, and head, and hand, and every other power had need take hold on the everlasting Truths of God.

For such are the winds that blow today, that we shall be carried about by them like thistle upon the hills, if we have nothing but our own strength to rely upon. God grant us to get closer to Him than ever and to stay there. And may He grant us yet further to use all our opportunities for usefulness, and all our life for fruitfulness to His glory! Amen.

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SMALL RAIN FOR TENDER HERBS NO. 1999

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
DECEMBER 25, 1887,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“As the small rain upon the tender herb.”
Deuteronomy 32:2.***

THIS is the language of the great Prophet, Moses, “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.” We read of Moses that *he was a Prophet mighty in word and deed*—he combined with his incomparable teaching an unequalled degree of marvelous miracle-working. He was equally great as a law-giver and as an administrator. This double power was found in no other Prophet till our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, came. The other Prophets were, many of them, mighty in deed, but not in word. And others were mighty in word, but not in deed. Samuel spoke mightily in the name of the Lord, but his miracles were few. Elijah was a great doer, but few of his words remain. The combination of the two was peculiar to Moses and, afterwards, to Him of whom Moses had said, “The Lord your God will raise up unto you a Prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren, like unto me; unto Him you shall hearken.”

Moses was mighty, indeed, no man could have been more so. He it was that broke the power of Egypt by the 10 great plagues and led forth the once-enslaved people through the Red Sea—and fed them 40 years with bread from Heaven—and formed them into a nation. Heaven and earth and sea seemed to be obedient to Moses! God had girded him with such extraordinary power, yet I greatly question whether his power of word was not greater than his power of action. Although he was slow of speech, yet with Aaron as his spokesman, he faced the terrible Egyptian king and so vanquished him, that he dreaded the word of Moses more than all the armies of the nations! In the five volumes which Moses wrote, which are to this day accepted by us as lying at the base of Revelation, Moses proved his great capacity in word. He was a master with his pen—he neither failed in prose nor in poetry, in law nor in divinity, in history nor in prophecy. Inspiration from above was his strength—he spoke the very Word of God which he had heard when he was with Him on the holy mount.

Yet we perceive that *this might of word*, which dwelt in Moses, displayed itself frequently in a mild and gentle utterance in the text. He declares that his doctrine should drop as rain and distil as dew and that it should be “as the small rain upon the tender herb.” The highest power is consistent with the lowliest tenderness. He that is mightiest in word is mighty, not so much in thunder, earthquake and fire, as in a silent persuasive-

ness! God is often most present where there is least of apparent force. The still, small voice had God in it when it was written, "The Lord was not in the wind." It is a wonderful thing, however, this being "mighty in word." It is perfectly marvelous how God uses *words* to accomplish great things. Remember, it is by the Incarnate Word that we are saved at all. It is by the Inspired Word that you are made to know the will of God and it is through the words by which that Incarnate Word is preached unto man that God is pleased to communicate the inner life.

Faith comes by hearing, but there could be no hearing if there were no spoken words. You may wisely covet the power to speak with the words which God's wisdom teaches, for thus you will be an immeasurable blessing to your fellow men. You may well treasure up those words in your memory, even if you have not the gift to tell them out to others, for they are the wealth of the soul. You may be content to repeat the language of the Book of God, the *ipsissima verba*, the very Words of Inspiration, if you cannot put together sentences of your own, for the pure Word of God is, by itself, the best thing a man can say! And to repeat a text is often better than to preach a sermon from it. We cannot too widely scatter the actual language of the Holy Spirit, for we cannot tell what work the Divine utterance may perform. Thank God that He uses words, for thus He comes very near to us. Ask Him to open your own lips, that you may show forth His praise! And if that is not granted you, then ask Him to open your ears, that His Words may sink into your souls and prove a savor of life unto life to you.

I intend to make three observations upon my text. Moses says that his doctrine should be as the small rain upon the tender herb.

I. Our first observation is, MOSES MEANT TO BE TENDER. Moses intended, in the sermon he was about to preach, to be exceedingly gentle. He would water minds as tender herbs and water them in the same fashion as the small rain does. He would not be a beating hail, nor even a down-pouring shower, but he would be, "as the small rain upon the tender herb." And this is the more remarkable because he was about to preach *a doctrinal sermon*. Does he not say, "My *doctrine* shall drop as the rain"? Time was when a doctrinal sermon seemed to be most appropriately preached with clenched fists! The very idea of a doctrinal sermon seemed to mean a fight—a sort of spiritual duel in which the good man was evidently bent upon demolishing somebody or other who held contrary views. I trust we are learning better and that we try, now, to let doctrine distil as rain and drop as dew—"as the small rain upon the tender herb."

It is our duty at certain turning points of the road to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, but we are to remember that our contentions are the contentions of *love*—and that it ill becomes the man who holds the Truth of a loving Savior to hold it in bitterness, or contend for it with rancor. You will possibly think that I have been guilty in this matter, but I cannot make such a confession to any large extent. I have felt no bitterness and, when I have spoken forcibly, I have yet restrained myself from harder things which I might truthfully have brought forth. Yet, I regret that I have been forced into controversy for which I have no taste, and in which I have no pleasure. I have been driven to it—I have

never sought it. To spread the Gospel I should choose the gentler method. It is only to *defend* it that I have to draw the sword. Fight for the Truth of God, yes! Be willing to live or die for the Truth of God, but if you wish to spread it, you will do it best by letting it drop as rain and distil as dew, gently and tenderly, “as the small rain upon the tender herb.”

It is equally remarkable that this discourse of Moses was *a sermon of rebuke*. He rebuked the people and rebuked them, too, with no small degree of sternness, when he said, “Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked: you grew fat, you are grown thick; then he forsook God which made him.” He warned the people of their great sin and he did not hesitate to say, “They are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them.” Yet he felt that he had rebuked with the utmost meekness and had still been as the soft dew and gentle rain. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, upbraiding must be done in tenderness! Rebukes given in an unkind spirit had better not be given at all.

I passed by a preacher, one evening, who was addressing certain villagers in the most terrific strains. He was telling them, “The Lord is coming! The Lord is coming! You will all be destroyed!” There was plenty of sound, though I fear not an excess of *sense*—and there was a savor of delirious prophecy which went beyond the Scriptures into personal visions and figments of the man’s own brain! I wondered what he hoped to do. The people were standing at their doors, smoking their pipes and taking it in as a curious kind of display. Perhaps better that he should rage like a sea in a storm than give the people no warning and yet I do not suppose any good could come of his shouts. Had he spoken gently to them, one by one, concerning faith in God—had he gone to their doors and spoken of the great love of Jesus Christ—perhaps there would have been some result. But one would not look for good fruit from the boisterous shouts of nonsense! And yet there are many who feel that if a man shouts and perspires, something must be effected.

Wisdom does not learn her exercises among the athletes, but among calm scholars. We do not blacken peoples’ eyes to make them see, nor bully them into peace, nor kick them into Heaven. To strive, cry, lift up and cause clamorous voices to be heard in the streets is not Christ’s way! Not a syllable have we to say against *zeal*, even when it breaks over all bounds of propriety—but it is the zeal which we value—and not the outbursts by themselves! We question greatly whether too often physical force is not mistaken for spiritual power—and this is an error of a mischievous kind. We need, if we can, to draw our hearers with bands of love, not with cart ropes and with “cords of a man”—not such cords as we put about dogs and bulls.

There must be in all rebukes an abounding gentleness, softness and holy sorrow. When Paul is writing a very strong condemnation, he says, “I now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ.” Jesus Christ denounces the doom of Jerusalem, but it is with a flood of *tears*. He cries, “Woe unto you, Chorazin!” but He feels a woe within His own soul while He is uttering woe to them! Dear Brothers, it is well to observe this—that though it was a doctrinal discourse, it was tender. And though Moses was preaching a rebuking discourse, it was still “as small rain upon the tender herb.”

Yet once more, in this discourse, this swan's song, this final deliverance of the great Judge in Israel, *he was about to declare the wrath of God* for here we read words like these—"A fire is kindled in My anger and shall burn unto the lowest Hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend My arrows upon them," and so on. Never stronger, sterner language! But even this was made to drop as the small rain. And if ever there is a time when the sluices should be pulled up and the floods of sympathy should flow, it is when we preach the wrath of God! I am certain that to preach the wrath of God with a hard heart, cold lips, tearless eyes and an unfeeling spirit is to harden men—not to benefit them. If we preach these terrors of the Lord *persuasively*, we have hit the nail on the head, for what does the Apostle say?—"Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."

Gently, as a nurse persuades a child, though in the background is the rod, we would woo men to Jesus till we win them! Though we tell them that they must have Christ or perish—they must believe in Him or be forever driven from His Presence into outer darkness, we do this because we love them—love them better than those who flatter them! We dare not keep back, for a moment, the fact that sin is a horrible evil and brings with it endless misery. Nor would we dare to soften a syllable of the heavy tidings which we have to bear from the Lord to the impenitent. Yet we have no joy in being the bearers of harsh news—it is the burden of the Lord to us. We wish we had permission to preach always upon cheering themes, as, indeed, we would gladly do if men would turn to Jesus and live! Yet, even now, when we beat the warning drum, we do not forget to interject frequent pauses between the alarming strokes, that Pity's gentle voice may take its turn in the winning of souls.

I remember one servant of God who could not help interrupting the great New England minister by crying out, "Mr. Edwards, Mr. Edwards, is He not, after all, a God of mercy?" I hope I should never, under any circumstances, give occasion for such a question! Though the Lord is a God of vengeance upon such as refuse His Son and reject His Grace, yet is He abundant in mercy, tenderness and long-suffering! And He delights not in the death of any, but that they should turn unto Him and live! Therefore let us give space for Mercy to persuade while Justice threatens! The right spirit in which to preach the terrors of God is the spirit of the text. We are to make even our solemn warnings drop, "as the small rain upon the tender herb." Moses meant to be gentle. Though it was a doctrinal discourse, a searching and rebuking discourse—and a discourse full of the threats of God—yet he displayed in it his customary meekness.

Now, beloved Friends, if Moses meant to be tender, *how much more truly was Jesus tender!* The representative of the Law aimed at tenderness—how much more the Incarnation of the Gospel! He who came with 10 broken Commands to threaten men was tender—how much more He who comes with five wounds and fountains of eternal pardon to persuade men! How winning is the meek and lowly Lamb or God! The moment we look to His life, we see that wondrous tenderness displayed in His doctrine, for His teaching was compassionate in manner. Somehow, I cannot imagine our Lord Jesus Christ preaching with tones and manners at all

similar to certain of His professed followers who thunder at men with a vehemence devoid of sympathy! He did thunder in indignation, but the lightning of conviction was by far the more noticeable—and with the lightning there always came a shower of pity.

The Sermon on the Mount, I have sometimes thought, was such as an inspired woman might fitly have preached! It is so full of heart and so exceedingly pitiful. For the most part, throughout His ministry, though masculine to the last degree, yet there is a softness, a pathos of love—as if in the Person of Christ we had both man and woman, as in the first Adam at the creation. Jesus is the Head of the race, completely combining, in His own Person, all the vigor of the man and all the affection of the woman. He is, as it were, both Father and Mother to the children of men, blending everything that is sweet in manhood and womanhood in one Individuality and showing it all in His style which is as forcible as a hero's energy in the day of battle—and yet as gentle as a nurse with her children.

All the mannerisms of Christ are wooing. And, therefore, we read, “Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him.” Hence we have Him saying, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not.” To Him the sick came by instinct as to a Physician peculiarly set for the healing of humanity! To Him the bereaved sisters, the widowed mothers and the outcast lepers ran with eager hope! Yes, to *Him* the wildest of maniacs yielded, feeling the irresistible spell of His love. Oh yes, our Lord's manner was gentleness, itself.

Furthermore, *His style of speech was compassionately considerate*, even as the dew seems to consider the withered grass and the small rain to adapt itself to the tender herb. In His teaching He evidently thought of the feebler sort and suited Himself to those depressed by grief. You find no hard words thrown in to make the speaker seem wise. There are difficulties about His doctrine inherent to the nature of truth, but they are never aggravated by His style. I suppose nobody ever went to Him and said, “Rabbi, what did You mean by such-and-such a word?” They knew the meaning of the words, though not always did they catch the inner sense. Their misapprehension was never the fault of the words which He used. His use of the parabolic style was especially remarkable—He kept on saying the Kingdom of Heaven is *like*—like this, like that. When He feeds the multitude, He never gives them indigestible food—His *menu* is always bread and fish—and likewise, when He preaches, there is no indigestible Truth.

For the most part, in the early days of His preaching to the outside multitude, He gave them little more than moral truth, for that was all they were able to bear. It sometimes amuses me to see how certain “modern thought” men prove themselves to belong to the outside many—and not to the inner circle of disciples—for they take the Sermon on the Mount and extol it as the *summit* of the doctrine of Jesus, whereas it was only His discourse to the multitude and not such spiritual teaching as He gave to His Apostles when alone. There were gleams and specks of the Divinely-spiritual Truths of God flashing out of the moral Truth like flames from a fire, but for the most part He gave the crowd that which it could receive and not that which would have been above their heads.

He crumbed the bread into the milk and gave the people a portion fit for their childhood. He fed them with milk, for they were not yet able to bear that strong meat which His servant Paul was afterwards permitted to bring forth in a lordly dish for the feeding and feasting of those who have had their senses exercised in spiritual things. The Lord was very careful as to the *manner* of His teaching and, as to the *matter* of His teaching, too, even to His chosen. "I have yet many things to say unto you," He said, "but you cannot bear them now." There was a gradual development in His teaching as He saw the minds of men were prepared to receive the Truth which He should speak—from which method of wisdom and prudence let His disciples learn a lesson!

Furthermore, note well that *the Truth which our Lord spoke had always a refreshing effect upon those that were spiritually alive*. Our blessed Master's sermons were, "as the small rain upon the tender herb," not merely for the softness of their descent, but for the wondrous efficacy with which they came. His Words fell not as fire-flakes to destroy, nor as the dust from the wilderness to defile, but always as the warm shower to cherish. What a delight it must have been to have listened to the Lord!

Oh, to hear Him preach just once! Ah, though He should rebuke me and do nothing else—yes, though He should thunder at me and do nothing else—how gladly would I listen to His voice and say, "Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears"! Surely this heart of mine would be more than glad to be as a fleece of wool, filled with the dew of His blessed doctrine! There must have been an unutterable sweetness, a delicious persuasiveness, a Divine power about the speaking of Jesus, for, "Never man spoke like this Man." His lips were as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh. Whatever He spoke was fragrant with infinite love and gentleness and, therefore, it revived the spirit of the contrite ones.

So we learn that Moses meant to be tender and Jesus was tender. What else do we learn? Why, that *all the servants of Jesus Christ ought to be tender*, for, if Moses was so, much more should we be! I know there are many here tonight who are preachers of the Gospel. Dear Brothers, let us endeavor, with all our might, to be always considerate towards those whom we address! Let us think of them as tender herbs, for many are so in their weakness, sorrowfulness, instability and ignorance! I am persuaded that we fix too high a standard when we preach and assume that our people know a great deal more than they do. I am sure we frequently need to go over, again, the elements, the fundamentals, the simplest doctrines of the Gospel to our congregations, for, though there are some that are fathers for whom we are grateful, yet it is true, today, as it was in Paul's day, we have not many fathers—and we ought not to preach with an eye to the few fathers—but with an eye to the many children!

We shall do well if the babes in Grace are fed by us and to do this our preaching must be, "as the small rain upon the tender herb." We must try to the utmost of our ability to be very plain and simple, for many will not understand us even then. I was greatly pleased with a complaint brought against me the other day, to which I plead guilty and I expect I shall plead guilty to it for many a day to come. Someone said, "Mr. Spurgeon gives us meat, but there's no gristle—he cuts out all the bone." They wanted a bit or two of hard bone, just to try their teeth on. Alas, many have broken

more than a tooth over the novel teaching of “modern thought!” Now, I have never been particularly earnest, when feeding my flock, to seek out the poisonous pastures just to see how much of injurious fodder they could bear without getting sick. No! I have had regard to those who are not yet able to discern the differences in spiritual things and, therefore, I have led them to those ancient pastures where the saints were content to feed in days gone by.

I think we cannot be too simple, nor too plain, nor set out the precious things of God in too clear a light. The little ones of God have very great needs and must have our special care. These tender herbs are very apt to be dried up and, yet, being tender, they are not able to drink in a great shower all at once. When I have been traveling, especially in southern France and Italy, I have come upon places where the river has burst its banks and covered all the land with water—then, instead of blessing the fields, it has swept everything out of them, buried them in mud—and killed the crops. There is a great difference between irrigation and inundation! But some preachers forget this. A sermon may sometimes act in that fashion to some of God’s dear tender ones—it may be a perfect deluge of doctrine, sweeping up by the roots those feeble plants which are not very deeply rooted in the faith. They shall not perish, but we must avoid everything which has a tendency to destroy even the least of them.

We do well to give the tender herbs the Water of Life, little by little. It must be, “Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little,” for God’s children are like our children and need little and often, rather than much and seldom! There is a loaf of bread and there is the child—you need to get that loaf of bread *into* the child. Well, you must do it by degrees, or else you will never do it at all! You will choke the child if you attempt to insert too much at a time into his limited storeroom. Take the bread and break it down—and in due time he will appropriate that quarter loaf and a great many loaves besides, for little children have great appetites! God’s children cannot, all of them, receive a mass of doctrine all at once—but they have a fine appetite and if you give them time, they will gradually appropriate, masticate and inwardly digest all the Truths of God so that they will be nourished and made to grow! Let every minister of Christ remember this and patiently instruct his hearers as they are able to bear it.

And so, dear Friends, I will say one thing more upon this point, which is, *let every Christian remember this*, for every Christian is to try and bring souls to Christ. We are *all* to be teachers of the Gospel according to our ability—and the way to do it is to be “as the small rain upon the tender herb.” Perhaps, dear Friend, you say, “Well, I should be small rain, without any great effort, for I have not much in me.” Just so, but yet that small rain has a way of its own by which it makes up for being so small. “How is that,” you ask? Why, by continuing to fall day after day! Any gardener will tell you that with many hours of small rain there is more done than in a short period with a drenching shower. Constant dropping penetrates, saturates and abides. Little deeds of kindness win love even more surely than one bounteous act. If you cannot say much of Gospel Truth at one time, keep on saying a little—and saying it often! If you cannot come out with a wagonload of grain for an army, feed the barn fowls with a

handful at a time! If you cannot give the people fullness of doctrine like the profound teachers of former ages, you can at least tell what the Lord has taught *you* and then ask Him to teach you more!

As you learn, teach! As you get, give! As you receive, distribute! Be as the small rain upon the tender herb. Do you not think that in trying to bring people to Christ, we sometimes try to do too much at once? Rome was not built in a day, nor will a parish be saved in a week! Men do not always receive all the Gospel the first time they hear it. To break hearts for Jesus is something like splitting wood—we need to work with wedges that are very small at one end—but increase in size as they are driven in. A few sentences spoken well and fitly may leave an impression where the attempt to, all at once, force religion upon a person may provoke resistance and do harm. Be content to drop a word or two to-day and another word or two tomorrow. Soon you may safely say twice as much and in a week's time you may hold a long and distinctly religious conversation! It may soon happen that where the door was rudely shut in your face, you will become a welcome visitor, but had you forced your way in at first, you would have effectually destroyed all future opportunity.

There is a great deal in speaking at the right moment. We may show our wisdom in *not* doing and in *not* saying, as much as in doing and saying. Time is a great ingredient in success. To speak out of season will show our zeal, but not always our sense. We are to be instant out of season as well as in season, but this does not involve incessant talking. I commend to everyone who would be a winner of souls by personal effort the symbol of our text, “as the small rain upon the tender herb.” The rain is seasonable and in accordance with its surroundings. The rain does not fall while a burning sun is scorching the plants, or it might kill them. Neither is it always falling, or it might injure them. Do not bring in your exhortations when they would be out of place and do not be *incessantly* talking even the best of the Truths of God, lest you weary with chatter those whom you desire to convince with argument. If you will wait upon the Lord for guidance, He will send you forth when you will be most useful, even as He does the rain. God will direct you as to time and place if you put yourself at His disposal!

Thus have I spoken, perhaps, at too great a length, upon the first head—Moses meant to be tender.

II. The second head is MOSES HOPED TO BE PENETRATING—“as the small rain upon the tender herb.” Now, small rain is meant to enter the herb so that it may drink in the nourishment and be truly refreshed. The rain is not to drench the herb and it is not to flood it—it is to feed it, to revive it, to refresh it. This was what Moses aimed at. Beloved, this is what all true preachers of Christ aim at! We long that the Word of God which we speak may enter into the soul of man, may be taken up into the innermost nature and may produce its own Divine result.

Why is it some people never seem to take in the Word of God, “as the small rain upon the tender herb?” I suppose it is, first, because *some of it may be above their understanding*. If you hear a sermon and you do not understand at all what the good man is talking about, how can it benefit you? If the preacher uses the high-class pulpit-language of the day, which is not English, but a sort of English-Latin—produced rather by *reading*

than by conversation with ordinary mortals—why then the hearer usually loses his time and the preacher his labor!

One said to me, “If I went to such-and-such a place, I would not need my Bible, but I should need a dictionary, for otherwise I should not know what was meant.” May that never be the case with us! When people cannot understand the meaning of our language, how can we expect that they can drink in the inner sense? I exhort any hearer here to whom it has not occurred that he must understand the sermon to be benefited by it, to seek out always, both in his hearing and in his reading, that kind of teaching which he can grip and grasp! He will rise to higher things by this means, but he cannot rise by that which never touches him. We cannot feed upon that which is high above and out of our sight. Ballooning in theology is all very fine, but it is of no use to poor souls down here below who cannot hope to be allowed a place in the car. Tender plants are not refreshed by water which is borne aloft into the clouds—they need it to come down to earth and moisten their leaves and roots! And if it does not come near them, how can they be refreshed by it? The fountains of Versailles are very grand, but for the little flowerpot in a London window, a cupful from a child’s hand, poured near the root, will suffice.

Many do not drink in the sacred Word of God because *it seems to them too good to be true*. This is limiting the goodness of God—God is so good that *nothing* can be too good to be looked for from Him. How many fail to grasp a promise because while they say it may be true in a sense, they do not receive it in *the* sense intended by the Spirit of God! They dwarf and diminish the sense and, in the process, they evaporate the real meaning and the Word of God becomes of no effect to them. In many an instance, the Gospel does no mighty works because of their unbelief. Depend upon it, God’s Word is a great Word, for He is a great God—and the largest meaning we can find in it is more likely to be true than a smaller one.

Many persons do not receive the Gospel promise to the full because *they do not think it is true to them*. Anybody else may be blessed in that way, but they cannot think it probable that *they* shall be! Though the Gospel is particularly directed to sinners, to such as “labor and are heavy-laden,” and to such as need a Savior, yet these good folks think, “Surely Grace could never reach to *me*.” Oh, how we lose our labor and fail to comfort men because of the unbelief which pretends to be the child of humility, but is really the offspring of pride! The small rain does not get at the tender herb because the herb shrinks from the silver drops which would cherish it.

No doubt many miss the charming influences of heavenly Truths of God because *they do not think enough*. How often does the Word fail to enrich the heart because it is not thought over! The small rain does not get to the root of the tender herb, for time and opportunity are not allowed to it. O you that would profit by the ministry of the Gospel, take this for your golden rule—hear once, meditate twice, and pray three times! I prescribe to you, as a composition and compound of excellent virtue, that there should be at least twice as much meditating as there should be hearing! Is it not strange that people should think sermons worth hearing, but not worth meditating upon? It is as foolish as if a man thought a joint of meat worth buying, but not worth cooking, for meditation is, as it were, a sort

of holy cookery by which the Truth of God is prepared to be food for the soul.

Solomon says, “The slothful man roasts not that which he took in hunting” and, verily, there are many of that sort, who hunt after a sermon and when they have found it, they roast it not—they do not prepare it as a Truth of God should be prepared before it can be digested and become spiritual meat. Why get books if you never read, or clothes if you never dress, or carriages if you never ride? Yet any one of these things is more sensible than hearing sermons and never meditating upon them! Do not do so, dear Brothers and Sisters, I pray you!

We are not members of the Society of Friends, although I hope we are friends and members of a society, but we should try and do after the service what they try to do during the service. Let us keep silence and let the Truth sink into us. We should be all the better if occasionally we were famished of words, for too often we are smothered with them. It would be profitable to have the supply of words stopped, that we might get below the language and look inward at the hidden sense, that we might reach the heart of the Truth and feel its energetic operation upon our heart and soul. We are too often like men who skim over the surface of the soil while there are nuggets of gold just out of sight, which we might readily secure if we would but stop and dig for them. You cannot hope to feel the efficacy of that which is preached, so that it shall be to you as the small rain upon the tender herb unless you thoughtfully consider it.

And, once more, we ought to *pray that when we hear the Word of God, we may be prepared to receive it*. It is of great importance that we should open the doors of our soul to let the Gospel enter. Hospitality to Truth is charity to ourselves. Some people sit, while we are preaching, like men in armor and, though the Gospel bow is drawn with all our force, the arrow rattles on their mail. It is only now and then that, Divinely guided, the arrow finds out a joint in their harness. But the profitable way to hear is to come here without armor of prejudice, or stubbornness and lay yourself open to receive the arrow—then will it be “the arrow of the Lord’s deliverance.” Gideon’s fleece became wet with the dew, for it was ready to receive it. Every bit of wool has an aptitude, a sponginess, to suck up dew—and the moisture of the atmosphere fell where it was welcome when it fell on that fleece! The fleece was a nest for the dewdrops to rest. So let it be with our spirits. I pray God to make it so.

“The preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord.” May He so prepare us that when the doctrine preached shall come to us as the small rain, it may not fall on stones and dead wood, but on growing herbs, which, though tender, will, nonetheless, gladly accept the blessed gift of Heaven and return thanks for it!

III. I shall conclude with this third reflection, that MOSES HOPED TO SEE RESULTS. You may, perhaps, say that you do not see this in the text. Will you kindly look again? “As the small rain upon the tender herb.” Now, observe, in looking about among mankind, that, whenever wise men expect any results from their labors, they always go to work in a manner suited and adapted to the end they have in view. If Moses means that his speech shall bless those whom he compares to tender herbs, he makes it

like small rain. I see clearly that he seeks a result, for he adapts his means.

There is a kind of trying to do good which I call the “hit-or-miss” style of doing it. Here you are going to do good—you do not consider what method of doing good you are best fitted for, but you aspire to preach and preach you do! Of course, you must give a sermon and a sermon you give. There is no consideration about the congregation and its special condition, nor the peculiar persons composing it, nor what Truth of God will be most likely to impress and benefit. Hit-or-miss, off you go!

But when a man means to see results, he begins studying means and their adaptation to ends—and if he sees that his people are strong men and women and he wants to feed them, well, he does not bring out the milk jug, but he fetches out a dish of strong meat for them! You can see he means to feed his people, for he has great anxiety when preparing their spiritual meat. When a person wants to water plants and they are tender herbs, if he looks for results, he does not drench them—that would look as if he had no real objective, but simply went through a piece of routine. Moses meant what he was doing. Finding the people to be comparable to tender herbs, he adapted his speech to them and made it like the small rain.

Now, what will be the result if we do the same? Why, Brothers, it will come to pass thus—there will be among us young converts like tender herbs, newly planted, and if we speak in tenderness and gentleness we shall see the results, for they will *take root* in the Truth and grow in it. Paul planted and then Apollos watered. Why did Apollos water? Because you must water plants after you have planted them, that they may the more readily strike into the earth. Happy shall you be, dear Friends, if you employ your greater experience in strengthening those whose new life is as yet feeble! You shall have loving honor as nursing fathers and your wise advice shall be, “as the small rain upon the tender herb,” for you shall see the result in the young people taking hold of Christ and sucking out the precious nutriment stored away in the soil of the Covenant that they may grow thereby.

Next, when a man’s discourse is like small rain to the tender herb, he sees the weak and perishing one *revive* and lift up his head. The herb was withering at first. It lay down as you see a newly-planted thing do, faint and ready to die. But the small rain came and it seemed to say, “Thank you,” and it looked up, lifted its head and recovered from its swoon. You will see a reviving effect produced upon faint hearts and desponding minds. You will be a comforter! You will cheer away the fears of many and make glad the timid and fearful. What a blessing it is—when you see that result—for there is so much the more joy in the world and God is so much the more glorified!

When you water tender herbs and see them *grow*, you have a further reward. It is delightful to watch the development and increase of Grace in those who are under our care. This has been an exceedingly sweet pleasure to me. I quote my own instance because I have no doubt it is repeated in many of you. It has been a great delight to me to meet men serving God and preaching the Gospel gloriously who were once young converts and needed my fostering care. I know men, deacons of Churches, fathers in Is-

rael, that I remember talking to 20 or 25 years ago, when they could not speak a word for Jesus, for they were not assured of their own salvation. I rejoice to see them leaders of the flock, whereas once they were poor, feeble lambs! I carried them in my bosom and now they might almost carry me. I am glad enough to learn from them and sit at their feet.

It is a great thing for a father to see his boys grow into strong men, upon whom he may lean in his declining days. “Blessed is the man that has his quiver full of them”—they were the children of his youth and they are the comfort and joy of later days. You, dear Friends, in your own way, you shall comfort the youngsters who are just seeking the Savior and then, in later years, when you hear them preaching and see them outstripping you in gifts and in Graces, you will thank God that you were like the small rain to them when they were very tender herbs!

Once more, we water plants that we may see them *bring forth fruit* and become fit for use. So shall we see those whom God blesses by our means become a joy to the Lord, Himself, yielding fruits of holiness, patience and obedience, such as Jesus Christ delights in. His joy is in His people. And when He can rejoice in them, their joy is full. Let us try to be little in our own esteem, that we may be as the small rain. Let us try to be a little useful, if we cannot reach to great things—the small rain is a great blessing. Let us try to be useful to little things. Let us look after tender herbs. Let us try to bring boys and girls to Jesus. Let us look after the tender plants of the Lord’s right hand planting, those who are babes in Grace—the timid, trembling, half-hoping, half-fearing ones. Let us come down from the seventh Heaven to bless this fallen earth.

We have been reading about the trumpets and the “star called Wormwood”—let us come down from those high matters to commonplace affairs. Let us quit clouds and skies—and condescend to men of low estate. Let us come down from communing with the philosophers of culture and the Apostles of a new theology—to the ordinary people who live around us and cannot comprehend these fine fictions! Let us come down to the streets and lanes and do what we can for the poor, the fallen, the ignorant. Let us go with Jesus in the gentleness and sweetness of His Divine compassion, to the little children in years and the babes in Grace. So shall we be like Moses! So shall we be, better still, like the Lamb of God, to whose name be glory forever and ever!

Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —
Deuteronomy 32:1-31**

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”— 28 (VERS. I), 403, 518.

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UNBELIEF CONDEMNED AND FAITH COMMENDED

NO. 1784

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 8, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"They are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith."
Deuteronomy 32:20.*

*"Blessed is that man that makes the Lord his trust."
Psalm 40:4.*

THESE two texts will serve to show the different estimate which God has of unbelief and of faith. He says of unbelievers, in my text taken from Deuteronomy, "They are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith"—as much as to say that the absence of faith proves them to be froward, presumptuous, willful, disobedient—a people at cross-purposes with God. He says not only that they are perverse and froward, but He adds an emphatic word—"they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith." The second text most clearly shows us that God has a high approbation for faith, for He, Himself, by the Holy Spirit, says, "Blessed is that man that makes the Lord His trust." Here, then, we have set before us a great evil to which we are sadly inclined—and a great Grace which we greatly need. May God the Holy Spirit work faith in us by His own gracious power! Alas, it is still true that "all men have not faith." Even when an Apostle preached, we read of the congregation, that some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. There is that division among you at this time. Oh, that unbelievers may become Believers before this service ends!

I will tell you what I shall be driving at this morning—I have a special character in view and I long to be made useful to persons of that sort. Outspoken and naked unbelief the most of you abhor. Should unbelief display itself in its real hideousness, you who have been brought up religiously would be startled at its approach, would close the door immediately and bolt it fast lest such a demon of the deep should gain an entry into your souls! Consequently, unbelief, when it attacks the regular hearer of the Gospel, takes care to disguise itself. It pretends to be something other than it is. It does not walk abroad in all its natural deformity, but it approaches us as the Gibeonites came near to Israel when "they did work wily and went and made as if they had been ambassadors."

There are those here who do not doubt, for a moment, the existence or goodness of God—neither have they any question about the Inspiration and Infallible Truth of Holy Scripture—and yet they are entertaining within their hearts an unbelief which eats as does a canker! A deadening

unbelief is upon them so that they abide in darkness and take no pains to come into the Light of God. Yet they do not condemn themselves, but rather look for pity as though it were their *infirmity* and not their fault. To them, unbelief acts like Jezebel when she tired her hair and painted her face. Oh, that my words could strip off the disguise of this evil thing! Of this most deceitful form of unbelief I would say, as Jehu said of Jezebel, "Throw her down." And then I would cry—Go see, now, this cursed thing and bury it, for it is a horrible evil. That which prevents men from finding salvation by putting their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ is an enemy so hateful and malicious that no quarter must be given to it! No excuse must be made for it—it must be utterly destroyed from under Heaven!

Dear Friend, you tell me that you are by no means an infidel or a skeptic, and yet you do not believe so as to find peace with God! You tell me that you cannot believe, which is a confession that you are so false at heart that you cannot believe the Truth of God! It is well that you should admit this gross depravity, but I have reason to fear that you are hardly conscious of the horrible nature of the crime which you acknowledge! I beg you to lay to heart this fact—that unless you have faith in Jesus you will perish just as surely as if you were an open denier of the Word of God and a reviler of His Son! There are, doubtless, degrees in the terribleness of the *punishment*, but there are no degrees in the certainty of the fact that every unbeliever will be shut out from the blessing of the Gospel of 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 want you to remove every flattering unction from your souls and to know for sure that, "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). Dream not that because you do not happen to be an avowed atheist, or deist, or agnostic, that, therefore, your own form of unbelief is harmless! We read of Israel in the wilderness that, "they could not enter in because of unbelief"—yet they were *not* atheists! A passive unbelief will ruin a man as surely as an active infidelity! Suppose that an enemy is on this side of a river, destroying everybody? To find safety, the river has to be crossed, and there is but one bridge. Yonder man declares that he will never go over such a bridge—he does not *believe* in it! He asserts that it is a rotten old thing which would break down under his weight. He hates the structure. He will not even call it a bridge at all! He ridicules all who venture upon it. It is clear that he will stay on this side of the river and die by the pursuer's sword. He is the type of the avowed *skeptic*!

But where are you? You say with unfeigned distress, "I am horrified to hear that man talk so of that excellent bridge. I believe that it is well constructed and that it has carried hundreds of thousands over it. I cannot bear to hear a word said against it, for my dear father and mother found refuge by crossing it and they are now in the land of peace." Yet you do not escape by that bridge, yourself, though well aware of your danger! Do you answer, "Well, I do not feel worthy to go over it." Why, that is nonsense! It is as if you should say, I cannot swim and, therefore, will cross over the river by means of the bridge. Your unworthiness cannot be a *reason* for refusing to accept a free salvation! On the contrary, it is a reason

why you *should* accept it at once. However, it matters little what your excuse may be—you will perish forever if you do not believe in Jesus!

Take another illustration. A fatal disease is abroad and a remedy has been discovered of the most effectual kind. One man denounces the medicine, the physician who invented it and the apothecaries who distribute it—he can hardly find words enough in the dictionary with which to express his contempt for what he calls a monstrous quackery. He will evidently receive no benefit from the medicine. That is not *your* case—you are of quite another mind. You esteem the medicine, reverence the physician and even feel an affection for the apothecaries who distribute it! No question about the matter has ever crossed your mind—on the contrary, you are an advocate for the great remedy and believe firmly that it has healed multitudes of persons. *Why do you not take the wholesome medicine yourself?* You tell me that you are trying to get better and that you do not quite see how the medicine can heal you.

This shows that you mistrust the power of the medicine to heal you just as you are. You will derive no more benefit from it than the other man who rails at it! It is quite impossible that any man should receive the blessing which comes through the atoning blood of Christ unless he has *faith*—and whether he goes to the length of an utter contempt of the great Sacrifice, or stands off from it because he does not feel as he could desire—he will surely die without forgiveness. Out of Christ, the doom of eternal wrath will fall on you whether near to the Kingdom of God or far off from it.

I want to talk with those unbelieving people who are not avowedly skeptical. Some of these I have seen and I know that they are a numerous class. They are very sincere and are really seeking after salvation, but the one thing which they refuse to do is to believe in the Lord Jesus. They will not trust their God! They will not believe in the promise which He has made to us in Christ Jesus! They would suffer any *penance*. They would *give* anything they possess. They would cut off their right arm—they would consent to lose their eyes—if they might but be saved! But this *one matter of trust* in God and accepting *His way* of salvation is the point in which they quarrel with the Most High. Upon this matter, in which the Lord will assuredly never yield to them, they stand out very obstinately, and so prove that they are “a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.” If they would obtain the Lord’s blessing, the only way to it is faith. Oh, that they would hold out no longer, for, “Blessed is that man that makes the Lord his trust.”

I. To begin, then—our first statement is UNBELIEF IS FROWARDNESS—“they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.” One very frequent disguise of unbelief is that of humility. “I feel myself such a great sinner. I feel so much evil to be in my heart, I dare not believe in Jesus!” If you judged by appearances you might think this unbelief very modest, but, indeed, it is not so. It imitates the *tone* of humility, but it cannot catch the accent. This deceptive vice dares to hint that the sinner’s unworthiness is a reason why Jesus should not be trusted! What? Would any man tell me that his own wickedness is a reason why he should distrust *me*? That would be too absurd! Because you are such a

sinner, is God, therefore, a *deceiver* and not to be trusted? This is not humility, but audacity!

Our fearing to trust the promise of God because we are evil is a most perverse piece of wickedness. Surely, God is true, even if we are liars! *Our* falsehood does not make Him false, or deprive Him of His right to be believed! Do we dare to tell Him that He cannot save when He assuredly promises to save us if we trust Him? Do we deny His willingness to save when He sends us gracious invitations and entreats us to turn to Him? This is insolence—not penitence! However great a sinner you may be, there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared, for, “all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” Do not deny this. Do not be so profanely bold as to call Jesus a liar!

Unbelief also claims to be timid. It cries, “I am afraid to come to Christ, afraid to trust Him with my soul.” This is not true fear, but an evil pride! The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau! The sound is that of an amiable timorousness, but the spirit is that of frowardness. Friends, if you truly feared God, you would tremble at the idea of distrusting Him. It is a very daring act of impiety to question any promise of the Most High—it is the height of rebellion to deny the power of the death of His dear Son! That kind of timidity and humility is to be shunned and to be abhorred which dares to make God’s love a dream and His mercy a fiction! Since the Lord’s mercy endures forever; since Jesus has never yet cast out a soul that has come to Him, it is folly to talk of being afraid to come to Him! Dread doubting and fear not to trust your God!

Unbelief is a very froward thing. We repeat the statement and go on to prove it because, in the first place, *it calls God a liar*. Can anything be worse than this? God says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved,” and the unbeliever replies, “I cannot believe that Jesus will save me.” That is to say, translating it into plain English—You do not think that God speaks the Truth! You do not believe that God is able to make His promises good to you. You do, in effect, imagine that He has said a great deal more than He means, or promised more than He is able to perform! At any rate, you think it unsafe to trust Him with your soul. I beseech you, if you must transgress, do not select a sin so presumptuous and so provoking as the sin of denying the Truth of the Most High! “He that believes not God has made Him a liar because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son.”

Oh, you poor, timorous soul, as some would call you, I will not flatter you, or excuse you, for I am afraid you must be very proud or you would not look the great Father in the face, and say, “You will not receive me if I come back to You like the prodigal child”—when, again and again, He invites you to return and promises to receive you. O Soul, can you dare to look up to the Cross of Jesus and say, “There is no life in a look at the Crucified One for me”? Can you even *think* of the Holy Spirit and then say that He has no power to change a heart so black and hard as yours? Oh that this miserable slander of God and of His Christ might be stopped!

Again, unbelief is great frowardness because *it refuses God’s way of salvation*. No man can read the Scriptures without seeing God’s way of

salvation is not by works nor by feelings, but by *trusting in the Son of God* who has offered a full atonement for sin. Now the sinner says, "Lord, I would do or suffer *anything* if I might, thereby, be saved." God's answer is, "Trust in My Son"—and this is put into a great many shapes to make it plain! Jesus says, "This is the work of God"—the highest and noblest work—"that you believe on Him whom He has sent." But the soul wriggles away from this believing in Jesus. It cries, "Surely I must *feel* this, that, and the other!" Oh foolish heart! Stop all these vain observations and *listen* to this one thing—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved!" If you will make the Lord your trust, you shall be blessed—but if you will not, you are assuredly accursed—seeing you have rejected the blood of the Eternal Sacrifice, refused the way of mercy which Infinite Love has appointed and done despite to the Spirit of God. To what a pitch of madness you have reached! You will sooner destroy your own soul than treat your God as you would treat an honest man! You can trust your wife, your husband, your father, or your friend—but you will not trust your Maker! You will sooner go to Hell than trust yourself with Christ! Ah me! Ah me!

Unbelief is a very froward thing, again, because *it very often makes unreasonable demands of God*. When Thomas said, "Unless I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe," he was speaking very frowardly. I have heard the sinner say, "Oh, Sir, if I could have a dream! If I could be broken down with anguish, or if I could enjoy some remarkable revelation—THEN I would believe God!" This, also, is frowardness. And so you dare look the Eternal in the face and say, "You shall be a liar to me unless You will gratify my whims and wishes, and do this or that to prove what I admit to be true." Will you say to your fellow man, "Sir, you have offered to help me in this time of need. I am quite willing to depend upon you for that help, provided you will do it in *my* way—the way which you propose for my assistance I utterly reject"? You will probably turn your friend against you if you talk so!

Beggars must not be choosers—certainly not with God! If I mistrust a friend who has been good to me all my life, it is an unjust thing. And if I tell him that I cannot believe him unless he will do what I choose to demand of him, I am insulting him. This towards *man* is evil—but what is it towards *God*? What? Must God do according to *our* mind and play the lackey to *us* or else He shall be under this penalty—that we will not believe His Word nor accept His gracious forgiveness? Shame on unbelief, that it should be so insulting to the God of Heaven before whom angels bow with veiled countenances! Surely, the devil, himself, cannot go further than unbelief—nor so far—for he *believes and trembles!*

Unbelief is very froward, next, because *it indulges hard thoughts of God*. Why do you not trust your God to save you by the blood of Jesus? Do you say that, "Salvation by faith is too good to be true"? Is *anything* too good to come from God, who is infinitely good? Is He not Love? Do you say, "If I were to come to Him, He would not receive me"? How dare you say *that* when it is written, "Him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out"! "Oh, I have so offended that if I were to cry, 'Father, I have sinned,' I could not expect Him to forgive my offense." This is a base slandering of the

heavenly Father! What penitent has He ever repelled? You know not how good He is—He is inconceivably gracious, He delights in mercy! It is His joy to pass by transgression, iniquity and sin. Have you never heard that, “as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than your ways, and His thoughts than your thoughts”? Has He not declared that He will abundantly pardon? Has He not said, “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”? Why will you so cruelly defame the Ever-Merciful One? Turn from this wickedness or you will destroy your own soul!

And yet again, unbelief is a very froward thing because *it disparages the Lord Jesus*. It tramples upon the blood of the Son of God! The unbelieving sinner virtually asserts that he has discovered the limit of the Savior’s power to save and that he stands just over the margin to which His Grace extends, for he thinks that Jesus may save anyone except himself! O Soul, do you doubt the infinite virtue of the Divine Sacrifice? Do you question the power of the intercession of the risen Lord? Is it not true, as He has said it, that He is, “able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them”? “Oh, but I am such a singular person.” And are you so singular that you have a right to limit the Holy One of Israel? Oh, if you did but know my Lord and Master, you would not talk so, for He, with a word, can cast out devils, heal the sick and raise the dead! He has but to say “Son, your sins are forgiven you,” and they are forgiven! He has but to look on you, poor sinner, and you shall live! Yes, be assured that if *you* will look on *Him*, you shall live! Has He not said, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth”? Has He not also said, “He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live”? If you believe, you shall see the Glory of God! Trust Him, trust Him! He deserves your trust, for He is a great Savior for the greatest of sinners.

And do you not think it is another instance of great frowardness that unbelief *casts reflections upon the Holy Spirit*? It seems to say, “I feel sorely afraid and, therefore, there is no peace for me. I am too hardened and foolish for the Holy Spirit to lead me to faith in Jesus and, therefore, I will not trust.” “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Change *you*, man? Why, He has turned *millions* from darkness to the Light of God! Look upward—see what hosts surround the Throne of Glory and “day without night” magnify His saving Grace! Not save *you*? Who are you that you should stand out against the witness of the Spirit of Truth? Will you refuse the three-fold witness of the Spirit, the water and the blood? Who are *you* that you should set yourself up as a kind of vanquisher of Grace, conquering Grace by your sins and saying to the ocean of God’s love, “This far shall you come, but no further”? Your unbelief is a very froward thing—nothing can be said for it—it dishonors Father, Son and Holy Spirit! It denies the Inspired Scripture and keeps your soul in cruel bondage.

This vile unbelief *has in it a tendency to destroy the Gospel itself*. If it could but have its own way, it would undermine the whole fabric of salvation. When a man says that God cannot save him, he suggests that there maybe others in the same case. Where, then, is Christ’s wisdom in bid-

ding us preach the Gospel to every creature? If it would be vain for one man to believe, each one of us would be afraid that it would be vain for us, also, and where, then, would be the Gospel promise? If it could be proven that any one man, if he believed in Jesus, would not be saved, then the Gospel itself would be disproved! Who among us would have any ground for believing in Christ if we knew it were possible to believe in Him and yet to be cast away? What is this but to rob us all of hope? Why, man, you are scuttling the ship! I mean that such is the tendency of your unbelieving talk.

If Jesus is not worthy to be trusted and you seem to say so by your own refusal to trust Him, then all of us who are resting upon Him for salvation are under a delusion! Do you mean to say this? If you, as a sinner, cannot be saved upon believing in Christ, then the whole Gospel is called into question—you have broken the whole staff of bread for the souls of men! Oh, wicked unbelief! God-dishonoring, soul-killing unbelief! Dear Hearer, be warned against it, for it will shut you out of Heaven unless you shut it out of your heart!

II. And now, secondly, we turn to the better side of our subject and remark that FAITH HAS THE DIVINE APPROVAL. “Blessed,” says God, “is that man that makes the Lord his trust.” *We are sure that it so.* Wherever there is faith, God is pleased with it, for faith is the sure mark of God’s elect. We can only know them by their believing in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. God would never have set that of which He disapproved to be the mark of His eternal choice, but, as He makes faith in Jesus to be the token of His covenanted ones, He must approve of it. Remember that God has been pleased, in His great love, to make this the main requirement of the Gospel. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

The Lord puts faith into the very forefront because He delights in it. I find not that the Lord has promised salvation to love, or to patience, or to courage—admirable as these Graces are—He has put this crown upon the head of *faith*. “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” The Lord must certainly approve of that which He makes to be the grand necessity of salvation! Do you not know that God has made faith to be the one thing necessary in the matter of prayer? If you come before Him in prayer, He will not ask you to bring your hands laden with gifts, nor to drop from your tongue choice words of eloquence! But you “must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him,” or else you can have nothing at His hands. If, then, God has made the efficacy of prayer to turn upon faith, He must have a high estimate of it! He has made faith to be the master key by which all the chambers of His treasury may be unlocked and, therefore, *depend upon it*, He will never cast it out as unwarranted and presumptuous. “Blessed is that man that makes the Lord His trust,” whoever that man may be!

Beside that, He has been pleased to make faith to be the mode and manner of the spiritual life. “The just shall live”—how? By *works*? No—“the just shall live by *faith*.” There is no living except by faith. Let any child of God try to live by sense or reason, even for a day, and see how miserable he will be! It comes to this with me—I must believe my God or

else I perish. I can walk the waves by faith—but, beginning to doubt—I sink. It is only as I trust that my soul can bear her daily burden and perform her daily duty. If, then, God has made faith to be the way of His people, rest assured it can never be wrong for a soul to exercise faith in Him. Why, Brothers and Sisters, look what God has done to make us believe! He cannot object to our trusting in Him, seeing He works to that end! For this purpose the Scriptures are in our hands. John says, “These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ” (John 20:31). The Lord multiplies His exceedingly great and precious promises that we might have strong consolation and find it easy to put our trust in Him!

His Holy Spirit comes on purpose to work faith in the soul and the witness of the Holy Spirit in the Word, and in the hearts of His people, is intended to create and nourish faith in God. The Lord rewards faith even in this life! Read the 11th Chapter of Hebrews—see what men gained, what they enjoyed, what they did by faith! Unbelief does nothing, gets nothing, rejoices in nothing! But faith wins the blessing. The Covenant was made with Abraham, who “staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief.” Who are Abraham’s seed? Why, they that trust as Abraham trusted, that exhibit a whole-hearted confidence in God, feeling that what He has promised, He is able, also, to perform! Oh Souls, you cannot have too much faith in God! You need never say, “May I believe?” It is altogether another question—How dare you doubt your God? “But is it true,” asks one, “that faith means trusting in God?” That is it. God bids you trust Jesus and you shall be saved. Will you accept His testimony and trust Jesus? That is the whole of it.

In common life we exhibit faith in *man* and no one blames us for a legitimate trust. A man says that he has received a thousand pounds. How is that? He has nothing in his hand but a bank-note and that is merely a bit of paper. Yet he is quite confident that he has the thousand pounds because he has faith in the Bank of England and in its promises. That is my own mind as to God’s promise—it is to me the thing which it promises, even as the note for £1,000 is a thousand pounds. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” If you believe God as you believe your friend, you are saved—for faith has brought you into the state of salvation. But this is what men will *not* come to. They will stop and mutter and sputter, and spin all kinds of cobwebs—and invent all sorts of theories in order to evade the sweet necessity of trusting in the Lord! Simply and wholly to hang upon the bare arm of God and trust the merit of His Son—this is what they will *not* come to—for they are “a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.”

Furthermore, it is not unreasonable, but *it is highly reasonable that God should take pleasure in faith*. Beloved, look at yourselves. Judge of the Lord from yourselves in this matter—for the Lord Jesus permits you so to judge of the Father’s mind. You who are fathers, what would you say of your child if he did not believe your promise? If he said that he could not trust you, what would you think of him? If your boy had offended, but refused to ask pardon because he could not believe that you would forgive him, what would be your judgment of his character? Would you be pleased with him if he would not confess that he was wrong, but took to

sulking because he thinks you are unwilling to forgive? Would you take pleasure in such a child as that? No, but one of the beautiful things about your little children is just this—that they have not a thought or a care—but trust you implicitly! They never question where Monday's dinner will come from—father has always found food—father will always do so.

If you make them a promise of a treat on Saturday, look how they will jump for joy! Though there is still a week to come before that promise is to be fulfilled, yet they begin to live on the prospect of it and they enjoy the pleasure a hundred times over by the expectation of it! They will ask you tomorrow whether it is not already Saturday. You are pleased that your children should trust you—it would be most unpleasant for you if they did not. When children have lost confidence in their parents, farewell to domestic peace! If you, being evil, love to be trusted, must it not be so with God? If you, a poor sinner, come and say, "Lord, I have greatly sinned, but I believe You are such a greatly loving Father that you can blot it all out for Jesus' sake," do you not think that He will be pleased to hear your confidence? But He cannot be pleased with you when you say, "Lord, I know all about Your Gospel and its blessings, but I really cannot trust You!" Oh, naughty words! Vile words! How can they look for favors who thus throw dirt into the face of God? How shall He bestow His Grace on men who will not even believe Him?

God will accept our faith, for it is in conformity with our position towards Him. What position ought the creature to occupy to its Creator? Should it not constantly depend upon Him? What position should a sinner occupy towards His Savior? Should He not rely upon Him most heartily? What position should a child of God occupy towards the Divine Father but one of loving confidence? Brothers and Sisters, God loves faith because faith supplies the missing link between us and Himself! If we cannot keep His Law perfectly, as, indeed, we cannot, for we have already broken it—yet if we trust Him, our heart is right before Him! The complete confidence of the heart is the essence of obedience and the fountain of it. A servant who thinks evil of his master cannot be an acceptable servant to any man—he will be looking out for his own interests and, whenever they come crosswise with those of his master, we know what will happen! But if, after having acted very crookedly, the man should have proof of his master's affection for him, and should come to the belief that his master is a model of goodness, then you have laid the foundation of another kind of service, such as no wages can purchase! From a loving trust there will proceed patience, diligence, zeal, fidelity, obedience and everything which is suitable in a servant towards a good master.

So, when a soul comes to make the Lord its trust, it has set out upon the right track, and though it is but at the head of the way, yet it will make advances and arrive at no mean degree of rightness with God. "Oh," says one, "it seems such a small matter to simply trust." It may seem so, but within the compass of that little thing there lies a force whose power it would be difficult to measure. Every Grace in embryo lies within true faith! It is a virtue which contains within it seed enough to sow all the acreage of life with holiness! O my Hearer, God blesses faith, therefore, I

pray you, render it to Him! God has put His *curse* on unbelief—oh, may His Spirit help you to shake yourself free of it this day!

III. My time has failed me and, therefore, I must close by noticing, in the last place, this fact—that FAITH IS BLESSEDNESS. “Blessed is that man that makes the Lord his trust.” To believe in God is to be blessed by God. “Oh, but,” says one, “I believe in God and I am in great trouble.” Just so, and within that trouble there dwells a measureless blessing! Your trial is the veil which covers the face of a loving God. Faith will make you sing with the author of this Psalm, “I waited patiently for the Lord.” Faith says, “I am in deep trial, but all things work together for my good. It is, therefore, a great gain to me to be as I am. All these griefs and woes are but a heavenly surgery to cure me of the malady of inbred sin.” This enables the Believer to receive correction with patience. He knows that all is right and, therefore, the child of God frets not and does not kick against the pricks. As in the old days of surgery, a brave man laid himself down and gave himself up to the knife, so does the Believer resign himself to sharp affliction because he knows that it is necessary for his spiritual life and will tend to his perfection in Grace. Thus faith distils a potent medicine from poisonous plants and extracts light out of darkness. Is not this enough to make a man blessed?

Faith, again, releases the afflicted out of trouble. Turn to the Psalm, again, and read—“I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He has put a new song in my month, even praise unto our God: many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.” If you are shut in by affliction, like a man in a deep pit and, if instead of rising out of it by your exertions, you only sink lower, like one who struggles to rise out of miry clay. If you see no way of escape, whatever, do not despair or resort to desperate means, or think bad of God, but just pray and trust—and soon, like David, you shall bear witness to the blessedness of trusting! “Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.” The Lord knows how to deliver the righteous when they cannot guess how He will do it! Jehovah is not limited in ways and means. Is the Lord’s arm waxed short? Trust in the Lord in the dark and He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noonday. Thousands of saints who have tried and proved the faithfulness of the Lord unite in chorus to declare that He has delivered His people and will deliver them!

The man that makes the Lord his trust is blessed because his faith creates in him a deep peace. It is responsibility which causes the wear and tear of life—at least it is so in my case. Now, he who trusts a matter with the Lord sees that the fulfillment of the promise lies with God and not with him. When we trust in the Lord, we cease to worry because it is the Lord’s business to answer to our faith—

“Tis mine to obey, ‘tis His to provide.”

He who takes the Lord for his Guide no longer worries about the way. He who takes Him for his Watchman rests in perfect peace. He who accepts Him as a Savior looks for sure salvation at His hands. There is a wonderful calm in the heart when we can commit our way unto the Lord—then we delight ourselves in the Lord—and He gives us the desires of our heart.

That blessed act of casting every burden upon the Lord is faith's masterpiece and it gives a sweet quietus to all care. To rest in perfect peace of mind is the best blessedness beneath the stars—and we have it, for we hear the Spirit say concerning all the people of God, "And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him."

Now, suppose you and I were laboring to reach Heaven by our own merits? Then we might bid farewell to peace, for all the way we would be terribly afraid that we had not done enough, or suffered enough, or prayed enough, or repented enough. There is no rest upon *that* bed, for it is shorter than a man may stretch himself. But, "we who have believed, enter into rest." Jesus is our Rest—in Him we have peace with God. If I could make the Lord Jesus my trust and yet be lost I should be a great loser, but I should not lose so much as God would! How is that? I should lose my salvation, but the Lord would lose His Glory, His truthfulness, His goodness! His Gospel would be dishonored and His Son robbed of His reward. That cannot be! When a man trusts his money with a firmly established bank, he does not sit up all night to protect his cashbox and iron safe. No, his money is out of his own keeping and he feels at ease about it. Thus we commit our body, soul and spirit into the pierced hands of Jesus who has redeemed us, and we know and are confident that He is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him until that day. None can know perfect rest of heart but those whose minds are stayed on God by a sincere trust in Him.

Faith, in addition to bringing peace, creates a holy elevation of character, and that is blessedness. The man who lives by sight and walks according to the judgment of the flesh is confined within a range too narrow for blessedness. He is not much above the brute that perishes! His provender and stall are the main dependence of his joy! But the man that lives by faith ranges among eternal things and drinks from celestial fountains! His is a high, sublime, mysterious life. Is it not the life of God in man? I have compared the ascent of faith to climbing a succession of lofty stairways. Up from the depths we have already risen by no other means than faith in the Invisible! Not a single step before us can we see. Beneath and around, clouds and darkness roll in enormous masses—the mist hangs thick over our pathway. Like the world, which the Lord hangs upon nothing, so our life has no visible dependence! We put down our foot on what seems thin as air and behold—it is firm as a rock beneath us! Rising, ever rising, we tread from stair to stair and are safe as the Throne of the Eternal—but we never see more than one step at a time and at times scarcely so much as that. Sight brings us no comfort, but Faith fills us with delight, for above her head shines out as clear as the sun, the Words of the Immutable Jehovah!

"Ah," cries one, "I could not live with nothing to depend upon!" Oh, my Brother, is God nothing? Elijah had nothing to depend upon, for Cherith dried up and the ravens came no more with bread and meat. And the widow woman had only flour enough for one more meal—yet the little meal in the barrel wasted not and the cruse of oil never failed! Isaiah had nothing to depend upon but God, you know—that is to say, he had only

everything. The Believer has nothing to depend upon except his God, but what more does he need? What more could he *have*? Mark how yon heavens stand without a pillar! See how the round world floats in space without a stay! What more does the universe require than the power of the Eternal? O Believer, get out into these deep waters where there is sea room for faith and no weak creatures to interfere with unmingled reliance upon God—for blessed is that man whose life is rendered sublime by an undivided confidence in the living God!

Lastly, blessed is the believing man when he thinks of dying, for he is sure and certain that he cannot truly die. Faith has so linked him with the one living God that he feels immortality pulsing through his entire nature! When he comes to lie on the bed of sickness and gradually decays, he has no fear of his departure! On the contrary, he looks forward with expectation to be delivered from the bondage and sinfulness of this mortal life and to be admitted into the liberty and perfection of the life eternal! Look at him as he quits the shores of earth—he is not torn away by violence, forced unwillingly into an unknown hereafter—no, he undresses for his last rest solemnly but expectantly! A song is on his lips and glory is in his heart! He has finished his work; he has been washed from his sin; he has embraced the promise and now he falls asleep upon the breast of his Redeemer—assured that he shall wake up in the likeness of his Lord! “Mark the perfect man and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.”

Oh, Souls, if you will believe, you shall have both Heaven on earth and Heaven in Heaven! But if you will *not* believe your God—your Savior—many sorrows shall be to you and, in the end, you will destroy yourselves forever! It matters not what excuses you make about this, or that, or the other—if you will not trust your God, He will have nothing to do with you! If you cannot believe Him. If you will make His Son to be false. He must say at the last, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” It cannot be otherwise! This shall make the great division between you and the righteous—that you believe not in Him—while they have made the Lord their trust. If you believe in the Lord Jesus, you shall be numbered with His chosen! And all His promises shall be fulfilled to you, for with you has He made an everlasting covenant which shall stand fast forever and ever when all visible things have melted away! May God uplift you from the miry clay of unbelief to the rock of confidence in Him, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 40*.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—192, 738, 685.**

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MEMENTO MORI

NO. 304

**DELIVERED OF SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 18, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“O that they were wise, that they understood this,
that they would consider their latter end.”
Deuteronomy 32:29.***

MAN is unwilling to consider the subject of death. The shroud, the mattock and the grave, he labors to keep continually out of sight. He would live here always if he could. And since he cannot, he at least will put away every emblem of death as far as possible from his sight. Perhaps there is no subject so important which is so little thought of. Our common proverb that we use is just the expression of our thoughts, “We must live.” But if we were wiser we should alter it and say, “We must die.” Necessity for life there is not, life is a prolonged miracle. Necessity for death there certainly is, it is the end of all things.

Oh that the living would lay it to heart. Some years ago, a celebrated author—Drelincourt, wrote a work on Death, a valuable work in itself, but it commanded no sale whatever. There were no men who would trouble themselves with Death’s heads and cross-bones. And to show how foolish man is, a certain doctor went home and wrote a silly ghost story, not one word of which was true, sent it to the bookseller, he stitched it up with his volume and the whole edition sold. Anything men will think of rather than death—any fiction, any lie. But this stern reality, this master truth, he puts away and will not suffer it to enter his thoughts.

The old Egyptians were wiser than we are. We are told that at every feast, there was always one extraordinary guest that sat at the head of the table. He ate not, he drank not, he spoke not, he was closely veiled. It was a skeleton which they had placed there, to warn them that even in their feasting, they should remember there would be an end of life. We are so fond of living, so sad at the very thoughts of death, that such a memento mori as that would be quite unbearable in our days of feasting. Yet our text tells us that we should be wise, if we would consider our latter end.

And certainly we should be, for the practical effect of a true meditation upon death would be exceedingly healthful to our spirits. It would cool that ardor of covetousness, that fever of avarice, always longing after and accumulating wealth. Oh, if we did but remember that we should have to

leave our stores, that when we have gotten our most, all that we can ever inherit for our body is one six feet of earth and a mouthful of clay. It would certainly help us to set loose by the things which we here possess. Perhaps, it might lead us to set our affections upon things above and not upon the moldering things below.

At any rate, thoughts of death might often check us when we are about to sin. If we look at sin by the light of that death's lantern by which the sexton shall dig our graves, we might see more of the hollowness of sinful pleasure and of the emptiness of worldly vanity. If we would but sin on our coffin lids, we should sin far more seldom. Surely we should be kept back from many an evil act if we remembered that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. And, maybe too, these thoughts of death might be blessed to us in even a higher sense, for we might hear an angel speaking to us from the grave, "Prepare to meet your God," and we might be led to go home and set our house in order, because we must die and not live. Certainly, if even one of these effects shall be produced by considering our latter end it would be the purest wisdom continually to walk arm in arm with that skeleton teacher—Death.

I propose this morning, as God shall help me, to lead you to consider your latter end. May the Holy Spirit bend your thoughts downward to the tomb. May He guide you to the grave, that you may there see the end of all earthly hopes, of all worldly pomp and show. In doing this, I shall thus divide my subject. First, let us consider Death. Secondly, let us push on the consideration by considering the warnings which Death has given us already. And then, further, let us picture ourselves as dying—bringing to our mind's eye a picture of ourselves stretched upon our last bed.

I. In the first place, then, LET US CONSIDER DEATH.

1. Let us begin by remarking its origin. Why is it that I must die? From where came these seeds of corruption that are sown within this flesh of mine? The angels die not. Those pure ethereal spirits live on without knowing the weakness of old age and without suffering the penalties of decay. Why must I die? Why has God made me so curiously and so wondrously—why is all this skill and wisdom shown in the fashioning of a man that is to endure for an hour and then to crumble back to his native element—the dust?

Can it be that God originally made me to die? Did he intend that the noble creature, who is but a little lower than the angels, who has dominion over the works of God's hands, beneath whose feet He has put all sheep and oxen, yes, and the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea and whatever passes through the paths of the sea—did he intend that that creature should waste away as a shadow and should be as a dream that continues not? Come, my soul, let this melancholy thought thrust itself

upon your attention. You die because you sin! Your death is not God's primal ordinance, but it is a penalty brought upon you on account of the transgression of your first parent.

You would have been immortal if Adam had been immaculate. Sin, you are the mother of Death! Adam you have dug the graves of your children! We might have lived on, in everlasting youth, if it had not been for that thrice-cursed theft of the forbidden fruit. Look, then, that thought in the face. Man is a suicide. Our sin, the sin of the human race, slays the race. We die because we have sinned. How this should make us hate sin! How we should detest it because the wages of sin is death! Brand then, from this day forward, the word Murderer on the brow of sin.

2. In considering Death, let us go a step further and observe not only its origin but its certainty. Die I must. I may have escaped a thousand diseases, but Death has an arrow in his quiver that will reach my heart at last. True, I have one hope, a blissful hope, that if my Lord and Master shall soon come, I shall be among the number of them that are alive and remain, who shall never die, but who shall be changed. I have that fond anticipation that He will come before this body of mine shall crumble into dust and that these eyes shall see Him when He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. But, however, if it is not so, die I must. "It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment.

Run! Run! But the Pursuer shall overtake you. Like the stag before the hounds we fly swifter than the breeze, but the dogs of Death shall outstrip us—fever and plague, weakness and decay. He has but to let slip these dogs and they are on us and who can resist their fury? There is a black camel upon which Death rides, say the Arabs and that must kneel at every man's door. With impartial hand he dashes down the palace of the monarch as well as the cabin of the peasant. At every man's door there hangs that black knocker and Death has but to uplift it and the dread sound is heard and the uninvited guest sits down to banquet on our flesh and blood. Die I must.

No physician can stretch out my life beyond its allotted term. I must cross that river Jordan. I may use a thousand stratagems, but I cannot escape. Even now I am today like the deer surrounded by the hunters in a circle, a circle which is narrowing every day. And soon must I faint and pour out my life upon the ground. Let me never forget, then, that while other things are uncertain, Death is sure.

3. Then, looking a little further into the shade, let me remember the time of my Death. To God it is fixed and certain. He has ordained the hour in which I must expire. A thousand angels cannot keep me from the grave an instant when that hour has struck. Nor could legions of spirits cast me into the pit before the appointed time—

***“Plagues and death around me fly,
Till He please I cannot die;
Not a single shaft can hit,
Till the God of love sees fit.***

All our times are in His hand. The means, the way I shall die, how long I shall be in dying, the sickness and in what place I shall be seized with the contagion—all these are ordained. God has in His mind’s eye the wave that shall engulf me, or the bed in which I shall breathe out my last. He knows the stones that shall mark my sleeping place and the very worm that shall crawl over this face when it shall be cold in death.

He has ordained everything. And in that Book of Fate it stands and never can it be changed. But to me it is quite uncertain. I know not when, nor where, nor how I shall breathe out my life. Into that sacred ark I cannot look—that ark of the secrets of God. I cannot pry between the folded leaves of that book which is chained to the Throne of God, wherein is written the whole history of man. When I walk by the way I may fall dead in the streets. An apoplexy may usher me into the presence of my Judge. Riding along the road, I may be carried as swiftly to my tomb. While I am thinking of the multitudes of miles over which the fiery wheels are rimming, I may be in a minute, without a moment’s warning, he sent down to the shades of death.

In my own house I am not safe. There are a thousand gates to Death and the roads from Earth to Hades are innumerable. From this spot in which I stand there is a straight path to the grave. And where you sit there is an entrance into eternity. Oh, let us think, then, how uncertain life is. Talk we of a hair—it is something massive when compared with the thread of life. Speak we of a spider’s web—it is ponderous compared with the web of life. We are but as a bubble. No—less substantial. As a moment’s foam upon the breaker, such are we. As an instant spray—no, the drops of spray are as enduring as the clouds of Heaven compared with the moments of our life.

Oh, let us, then, prepare to meet our God, because, when and how we shall appear before Him is quite unknown to us. We may never go out of this hall alive. Some of us may be carried from here on young men’s shoulders, as Ananias and Sapphire of old. We may not live to see our homes again. We may have given the last kiss to the beloved cheek and spoken the last word of fondness to those who are near to our hearts. We are on the brink of our tombs—

***“Ten thousand to their endless home
This solemn moment fly.
And we are to the margin come,
And soon expect to die!”***

4. But I must not linger here, but go on to observe the terrors which surround Death. I would call to your memory today the pains, the groans the dying strife, which make our frightened souls start back from the tomb. To the best men in the world dying is a solemn thing. Though, "I can read my title clear to mansions in the skies," and know that I have a portion among them that are sanctified, yet must it always give some trembling to the flesh, some quivering to the human frame, to think of breathing out my soul and launching on an unknown sea.

He that can laugh at death is a fool—stark, staring mad is he. He who can make jokes with regard to his end will find that if he should die jesting, it will be no jest to be damned. When this tent is being taken down, when this clay tenement begins to creak and shake in the rough north wind of Death, when stone after stone tumbles from its place and all the bonds are loosened, it will be a terrible moment then. When the poor soul stands beneath the temple of the body and sees it shake, sees rifts in its roof, sees the pillars tremble and all the ruins thereof falling about it, it will be an awful moment—a moment which, if it were continued and lengthened, would be the most dread picture of Hell that can be presented to us, for Hell is called the second Death.

An endless dying, the pangs of death prolonged eternally, the woes and the grief of dissolution made to last without an end—that, I say—is one of the most terrible pictures of Hell. Death itself must be a tremendous thing. Let me think, too, that when I die I must leave behind me all that I have on earth. Farewell to that house which I have so fondly called my home. Farewell to that fireside and the little prattlers that have climbed my knee. Farewell to her who has shared my life and been the beloved one of my bosom. Farewell! All things—the estate, the gold, the silver. Farewell, earth. Your fairest beauties melt away, your most melodious strains die in the dim distance. I hear no more and see no more.

Ears and eyes are closed and men shall carry me out and bury their dead out of their sight. And, now, farewell to all the means of grace. That passing bell is the last sound of the sanctuary that shall toll for me. No Church bell now shall summon me to the House of God. If I have neglected Christ I shall hear of Christ no more. No grace presented now—no strivings of the Spirit—

***“Fixed is my everlasting state,
Could I repent, 'tis now too late.”***

Death has now closed up the window of my soul. If I am impenitent, an everlasting darkness, a darkness like that of Egypt, that may be felt, rests on me forever. You may sing, you saints of God, but I must scream eternally. You may gather round the Sacramental Table and remember

your Master's death, but I am cast away forever from His presence, where there is weeping and waning and gnashing of teeth.

This is to die, my Friends and to die with a vengeance, too. To the Believer there are softening tints. There are lines in the picture which take out the blackness. The very shades help to make the Believer's glory brighter, the grim passage of Death makes Heaven shine with a superior luster. He thinks of the lands beyond the flood, of the beatific vision, of the face of the exalted Redeemer, of a seat at His right hand, of crowns of glory and of harps of immortal bliss. But to you who are ungodly and unconverted, Death has only this black side. It is the leaving of all you have and of all you love. It is an entering upon eternal poverty, everlasting shame and infinite woe. Oh that you were wise, you careless sinners—oh that you were wise, that you understood this and would consider your latter end!

5. I have thus, you see, pushed into another head which I meant to have dwelt upon for a moment, viz., the results of death. For, verily, its results and terrors to the wicked are the same. Oh that you were wise to consider them. Let me, however, remind the Christian, in order that there may be a flash of light in the thick darkness of this sermon, that Death to him should never be a subject upon which he should loathe to meditate. To die!—to shake off my weakness and to be girded with omnipotence. To die!—to leave my pangs and palms and fears and woe, my feeble heart, my unbelief, my trembling and my griefs and leap into the Divine bosom. To die!

What have I to lose by Death? The tumult of the people and the strife of tongues. A joyous loss indeed! To the Believer, Death is gain, unalloyed gain. Do we leave our friends by Death? We shall see better friends and more numerous up yonder, in the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in Heaven. Do we leave our house and comforts? "There is a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Do we lose our life? Ah no, we gain a better by far. For remember that we live to die, we die to live and then we live to die no more.

Without any fraction of loss, death to the Believer is a glorious gain. It is greatly wise, then, for a Christian to talk with his last hours, because those last hours are the beginning of his glory. He leaves off sin and begins to be perfect. He ceases to suffer and begins to be happy. He renounces all his poverty and shame and begins to be rich and honored. Comfort then, comfort then, you sorrowing and suffering Christians. "Comfort you, comfort you my people," says your God. Say unto them your warfare is accomplished, your sin is pardoned and you shall see your Lord's face without a veil between.

II. I shall now turn to the second head of my discourse. Brethren, fellow immortals. I desire you now to CONSIDER THE WARNINGS WHICH DEATH HAS ALREADY GIVEN TO EACH ONE OF US. We are so prone to turn away from this subject, that you must excuse me if I continue to bring you back again, again and again to it, alluring the brief time that can be allotted to the discourse of this morning. Death has been very near to many of us. He has crossed the ecliptic of our life many and many a time. That baleful planet has often been in close conjunction with us.

Let us just observe how frequently he has been in our house. Call you then to mind, first of all, how many warnings you have had in the loss of relatives. There is not a person here, I imagine, who has not had to make a pilgrimage to the tomb, to weep over the ashes of your friends. During the few years that I have been the pastor of this Church, how many times have I journeyed to the tomb? One after another of the valiant men in our Israel have been taken away. Many who were my spiritual sons and daughters, whom I buried first in the tomb of Baptism, have I had to bury afterwards in the tomb of death.

The scene is always changing. As I stand in my pulpit, I remark many an old familiar face. But I have to observe also, how many places there are which would have been empty, if it were not that God has sent other Davids to occupy David's seat. And, my dear Friends, it cannot be long with some of you before it shall be my mournful task, unless I die myself, to go creeping over your bodies to the tomb. That funeral oration may soon be pronounced over some of you. And you have good reason to expect it when you think how one after another of those who were the friends of your youth have gone.

Where is the wife with whom you lived joyously in the early days of your life? Or where is the husband whose fair young face so often looked on you with eyes of love? Where are those children who sprung up like flowers, but withered as they bloomed? Where are those brothers and those sisters, the elder born, that have crossed the flood before us? Where are those younger ones, whom we lived to see born, who shone with us for an hour, but whose sun even before it had reached its zenith, had set in eternal night? Brothers and Sisters, Death has made sad inroads into some of our families.

There be some of you who stand today like a man upon the shore when the tide is swelling towards his feet. There came one wave and it took away the grandmother. Another came and a mother was swept away. Another came and the wife was taken. And now it dashes at your feet. How long shall it be before it breaks over you—and you, too, are carried away by the yawning wave into the bosom of the deep of Death? The Lord has given many of you serious and solemn warnings. I do entreat you,

listen to them. Hearken now, to the cry which comes up from the grave of those who being dead yet speak to you. Hear them now, those lately buried ones, as they cry, "Children, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, prepare to meet your God, lest you should fail in the last dread day."

Think, again, what solemn and repeated warnings we have had of late, not in our families, but in the wide, wide world. It is a singular fact, that afflictions and accidents never come alone. A few weeks ago, we were all shocked with the news that one who sailed across the treacherous sea full many a time—and who at last had risen so high in his profession as to become captain of the largest vessel that was ever launched upon the deep—that he had suddenly perished in calm craters and his spirit had appeared before his God. It seemed to us to be a sad thing, that one who had endured the tempest and the storm, perhaps a thousand times, should sink as a ship that founders in mid-ocean, when not a wave rocks her keel. He is at home—he has just left his family—his foot slips and he finds a watery grave.

Quick upon that, as one messenger follows another, came the news across the sea of the falling of a mill, in which so many hundreds were at once overwhelmed by the ruins and sent hurriedly into the Presence of God. We can little tell what a thrill of horror went through the towns which are adjacent to that mill in America. Even ourselves, across leagues of the sea, felt stunned by the blow, when so large a number of our fellow creatures were hurried from this state of being into another.

Immediately after that there came another calamity, which is just fresh in our memory. A train is whirling along and suddenly the iron horse leaps from his road and men who are talking together, as fully at ease as we are, are amid the breaking of bones, the crashing of timber, whirlwinds of dust and steam and are snatched from time into eternity. And, now, this last week, how many tokens have we had that man is mortal? A judge who has long presided over the trials of his criminal countrymen, delivers his charge before a grand jury. He delivers it with his usual wisdom, calmness and deliberation. He has finished. He pauses. He lifts the smelling bottle to his nose to refresh himself. He falls back. He is carried from the court to receive his own charge, to go from the judgment seat on which he sat to the judgment seat before which he must himself stand.

Then, in the same week, a good man who has served his day and generation in a sister Church of this city is suddenly snatched away from before us. He who aided every good cause and served his day and generation—perhaps you may know that I allude to Mr. Corderoy—is suddenly taken away and leaves a whole denomination mourning over him. No, nearer than that has the stroke of death come to some of us. It

was but last Wednesday that I sat in the house of that mighty servant of God, that great defender of the faith, the Luther of his age, Dr. Campbell.

We were talking then about these sudden deaths, little thinking that the like calamity would invade his very family. But, alas, we observed in the next day's paper, that his second son had been swept overboard in returning from one of his voyages to America. A bold brave youth has found a liquid grave. So that here, there, everywhere, O Death, I see your doings! At home, abroad, on the sea and across the sea, you are doing marvels. O you mower! How long before your scythe shall be quiet? O you destroyer of men, will you never rest, will you never be still? O Death! Must your Juggernaut-car go crashing on forever and must the skulls and blood of human beings mark your track?

Yes, it must be so till He comes who is the King of life and immortality. Then the saints shall die no more, but be as the angels of God. So then, Death has spoken very loudly to us as a nation, as a people and has spoken to many of us, very loudly, in our own family circles.

Now, man, I will come closer home to you, still. Death has given home strokes to all of us. Put your finger in your own mouth, for you have Death's mark there. What mean those decaying teeth, those twitching pains of the gum?—an agony despised by those alone who feel it not. Why do some parts of the house tremble and hurry to decay? Because the rottenness that is in the teeth is in the whole body. You talk of a decayed tooth—remember, it is but part of a decayed man. You are yourself rotting, but a little less rapidly. But, to some of you, what warnings Death has given! He has laid his cold hand upon your head and frozen your hair. And there it lies in snowy flakes upon your temples. Or, perhaps, he has put that hand yet more heavily upon it and now your bare head is exposed to the rays of the sun and, remember, this is but a type of the exposure of your bare soul to the stroke of Death.

What signs have we all had in our bodies, especially the aged, the infirm, the consumptive and the maimed? What mean those lungs that are so soon exhausted of their breathing if you travel up a flight of stairs to your bed? Why is it you need your optic glasses to your eyes, but that they that look out of the windows are darkened? Why that affected hearing? Why that failure of the voice, that weakness of the entire body, that accumulation of the flesh, or that prominence of the bones and leanness of the body? What are all these but stabs from the hand of Death? They are, if I may say so, his warrants which he presents to you, summons you in a little time to meet him in another place, to do your last work and take your last farewell.

Oh, if we would but look at ourselves, we bear Death's signs and tokens about us in every part of our body. But some of us have had yet more

solemn warnings than these. If these suffice not, Death gives us a more thundering sermon. It is but a little while ago with me since Death with his axe seemed to be felling my tree. How the chips flew about me and covered the ground! It is a marvel to myself that I am here. Brought to Death's door, till the mind became distracted and the body weakened, so that one could scarce stand upright and yet again recovered—

***“Tell it unto sinners—tell,
I am, I am, out of Hell.”***

Still spared and yet alive. You have had fever, cholera it may be. You have been stretched on your bed time after time. And each time the branch has creaked and bent almost double, till we have said, “Surely, it must snap.” As a bowing wall have we been and as a tottering fence. Down it must come, so we thought. For a rough hand was shaking it and moving us to and fro. There was not a pillar that stood firm. There was not a beam or rafter that did not quiver. We said, in the bitterness of our soul, “My days are cut off and I shall go down to my tomb before my time.”

Well, man, and yet you are living in sin, as careless and unconcerned as you were before. Remember, if you will not hear Death's tongue you shall feel his dart. If you will not think of God when He gives you a warning from a distance, you shall be made to feel God, for “He shall tear you in pieces and none shall deliver.” Methinks I see this morning Death fitting his arrow to the bow. He is drawing it, pulling it tighter and tighter still. And the marvel is that he can hold the arrow in his hand so long. “Shall it fly?” says Death. “Shall I let fly at yon wretch's heart? He will not repent. Let me cut him off and send him to his destruction.” But the Lord says, “Spare him yet a little longer.”

But, wait, Death's fingers are itching. He says, “My Lord, let me take aim. I have bent my bow and made it ready. So sharp is it that it would cut through bars of brass, or triple steel, to reach a human heart. My throat is thirsting after his blood. Oh, let me slay him. Let him die.” “No,” cries the longsuffering voice of God. “Spare him, spare him, spare him yet a little longer.” But the time will soon arrive. Perhaps, before that clock shall reach the half hour, it may be said in Heaven, “Time is! Time was!” And then shall Death let fly—his arrow shall reach your heart. And you, fading down on earth, shall appear before the awful Judge of the quick and the dead and receive your final sentence. And, good God, if you are unprepared to die! O careless sinner, what then will become of you?

I have thus tried to make you think of Death's warnings in the loss of friends and the deaths of many abroad—moreover in the failing of our bodies and in the diseases which have begun to prey upon us.

III. And now to conclude, will you in the last place, PICTURE YOURSELF AS DYING NOW. Antedate for a very little while your last day.

Suppose it to have come. The sun has risen. "Throw up that window! Let me see that sun for the last time!—This is my last day!" The physicians whisper with one another. You catch some syllables and you learn the sad news that the case is hopeless. Much has been done for you, but skill has its limit. "He may survive," says the physician, "perhaps another twelve hours, but I hardly expect it will be so long as that. You had better gather his friends together to see him. Telegraph for the daughter. Let her come up and see her father's face for the last time in the world."

Yes, and now I begin to feel that the hour is coming. They are gathering round my bed. "Farewell! To you all, a last farewell! A father bids you follow him upwards to the skies. 'I know that my Redeemer lives.' My hope stands fast and firm in Christ Jesus! Farewell! Farewell! I commend you to Him who is the Father of the fatherless and the husband of the widow." But the hour draws nearer still. And now the lips refuse to speak. We have something to communicate—a last word to a wife. We mutter through our closed teeth, but no audible sounds are heard, no words that can be interpreted. We breathe heavily. They stay us up in the bed with pillows. And now we begin to understand that expression of the hymn, "The cracking of the eye strings." Now, we cannot see.

Strange to say, we have eyes still, but we cannot see. If we want anything we must feel about us for it. But, no, we cannot lift our hands. They begin to hang down. We can still hear and we hear the whisper, the question, "Is he dead?" One of them says, "I think there is still a little breath." They come very near and try to hear us breathing. That can hardly be heard. What must our sensations be in that solemn moment! There is a hush now in the room. The watch alone is heard ticking, as the last sands drop from the hour glass. And now, the last moment is come.

My soul is severed from my body. And where am I now—a naked, disembodied spirit? My Soul, if your hope is sound and real, you are now where you have longed to be. You are in the presence of your Savior and your God. You are now brother to the angels. You stand in the mid-blaze of the splendor of Divinity. You see Him, whom having not seen, you have loved, whom believing you have rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Ah, but there is another picture, the reverse of this. I cannot attempt to draw it, I will give you but the rough outline of it—a crayon sketch without the filling up. Yes, you are dying. And bad as you have been, you have some that love you and they gather round you. You cannot speak to them. Alas, you tell them more than if you could speak, for they see in your face that clammy sweat, those staring eyes. They see tokens that you have a vision of a something which would not bear to be revealed. You try to be composed. You quiet yourself. The doctor assists you to be damned

easily—he drugs you, helps to send you to sleep. And now you feel that you are expiring. Your soul is filled with terror. Black horrors and thick darkness gather round you. Your eye strings break. Your flesh and your heart fail. But there is no kind angel to whisper, “Peace, be still.” No convoy of cherubim to bear your soul away straight to yonder worlds of joy.

You feel that the dart of death is a poisoned dart, that it has injected Hell into your veins. That you have begun to feel the wrath of God before you enter upon the state where you shall feel it to the full. Ah, I will not describe what has happened. As your minister it may be I shall have to come up and see you in your last extremity and I shall have to say to the mother, to the children, to your brothers and to your sisters, “Well, well, we must leave this in the hands of a Covenant God.” I must speak as gently as I can, but I shall go away with the reflection—“O that he had been wise, that he had understood this, that he had considered his latter end.” My Heart, as I go down the stairs, shall ask me this question, “Was I faithful to this man? Did I tell him honestly the way to Heaven? If he is lost, will his blood be required at my hands?”

I know that with regard to some of you the answer of my conscience will be, “I have preached as well as I possibly could the Word of God, not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but with a desire to be simple and to come home to the heart. I must leave the matter there. If they are lost, oh, horror of horrors! But I am clear of their blood.” Ah, my Hearers, I hope it will not be so with you, but that each one of you, dying, may have a hope. And rising again may possess immortality and ascend to the Throne of my Father and of your Father, to my God and to your God.

And, now, if there is any impression upon your minds, any serious thought, let me send you away with this one sentence. The way of salvation is plain—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damped.” Believe—that is, trust—trust the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved. My God the Holy Spirit enable you to trust Him now, for with some of you—and mark this last sentence—with some of you it is NOW or NEVER.

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THE GREAT SUPREME

NO. 367

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 28, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“Ascribe greatness to our God.”
Deuteronomy 32:3.***

OUR God is one God. He is none other than the infinite Jehovah who of old spoke unto His people and revealed Himself by that marvelous incommunicable name—the name Jehovah! And yet though He is one God, we are taught in Scripture that he is one God in three most glorious Persons. While we rightly believe in the unity of the Godhead and are so far Unitarians, we believe there are three Persons in one God and thus we are Trinitarian Unitarians.

We believe that the Father is God and we ascribe unto Him greatness for we believe that He made the world and settled the pillars thereof. We believe that He fashioned the universe and that He moves the starry orbs through space. We look up to the wondrous depths of a shoreless night and we see the starry fleet sailing alone and we believe that God is their Captain. We look further still and as by the aid of science we discover the void illimitable, we believe that God dwells there and is the infinite Creator and Preserver of all things that exist and subsist. We ascribe greatness unto Him, the Creator and the Protector of the world.

We equally believe that Jesus Christ who is God incarnate in the flesh, is very God of very God. We conceive the work of our redemption to be as Divine a work as that of creation. We consider that the miracles He did partly furnish us with the abundant proofs that He must have been none other than God. We behold Him rising by His own might from the tomb. We see Him standing at the right hand of God making intercession for us. We expect with joy His second coming. We look forward to the Day of Judgment, wherein He shall hold the great Assize of nations. And for these reasons, believing Him to be God, we ascribe greatness unto Jesus Christ, the Surety of the better Covenant.

And as for the Holy Spirit, believing that the work of conversion is as great as even that of redemption, or creation, we believe Him to be the everlasting God. We see Him so described in Scripture that we dare not speak of Him as an influence, as a new emanation from the Deity. But we conceive Him to be a Person as very God of very God, as is the Father, so

is the Son. We solemnly subscribe to the creed of St. Athanasius, that though there are not three Gods, but one God, yet there are three Persons in the glorious Trinity in unity of the everlasting Jehovah, unto whom belong the shouts of the universe, the songs of angels and the ascription of our united praise,

Our God, then, is to be understood as Father, Son, Holy Spirit! One God whom we adore—and the words of Moses apply to the God of Christians as well as to the God of Jews—“Ascribe greatness to our God.”

I shall use the text, first, *as a caution*. Secondly, *as a command*. I shall be but brief upon each particular, for my strength I feel may speedily fail me, but I trust in God to make some impressions on our hearts.

1. First, then, I shall use it as A CAUTION.

Inasmuch as Moses has said, “Ascribe you greatness unto our God,” we believe that he intended thereby to hint to us that we ought to ascribe greatness to none else. If greatness is to be ascribed to God then none of God’s creatures may in the least share the honor of that mighty attribute of greatness. Now as there are many who violate this Truth and need this caution, they must allow me, if any of them are here, to caution them.

First, then, the man who trusts his salvation in the least degree to priests or pope, or any dignitary of any Church, violates this great command—“Ascribe greatness to our God.” If I bow my knee before a saint, if I worship a created being, if I seek the intercession of any save the one Person who is ordained to be the Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, I do in that degree derogate from the greatness of God. Some think not. They suppose that by using some influence with the Virgin Mary, or with the saints, these may be induced also to plead with God.

No, they consider it to be honorable to employ some ambassador, seeing they conceive themselves to be unworthy to go to God with their own suit and do not think Christ to be an all-sufficient Mediator to go for them. We reply that however humble they may think it on their part, however they may really and honestly suppose that they are magnifying God Himself, it becomes them to know this—that they are not doing homage to His greatness in supposing that a *saint* is more merciful than *God*. In imagining that a saint shall have more influence with God than His own Son, I suppose that His heart is not tender enough to be open to my cry without the use of influence—which is to say the very least of it—throwing some slur on the infinity of His mercy and detracting in no small degree from the benignity of His grace.

God has one Mediator because man needed it. He has no more mediators because neither God nor man requires any. Christ is all-sufficient.

You do need a mediator between yourselves and God, but you need *none* between *yourselves* and *Christ*. You may go to Christ just as you are, with all your filthiness, with all your sins, for He came to save you from what you now are and to make you a people for Himself who should show forth His praise.

Detract not, then, from the glory of His grace by bowing down before others and asking them to intercede for you. I remember a singular anecdote which sets out very clearly the absurdity of the intercession of the saints. Some of you may have heard it before, but as many of you may not, I will say it again—A good English farmer had a landlord who resided in Ireland. On a sudden the bailiff raised his rent so tremendously that the poor farmer could by no means pay his way and was getting entirely ruined. He therefore applied to the bailiff to have the rent taken down to a fair average. After applying scores of times he got no answer and he was very near destruction.

He applied to other persons whom he supposed to have influence with his landlord. But he made no way at all and was as ill-treated as before. So doing what he had quite a right to do, he just goes over to Ireland and calls to see his lordship of whom he had taken the farm. He was shown in to him and explained that he had taken the farm at a rent which he held to be fair to himself and to his landlord and that then he had made a living. But that on a sudden the bailiff unaccountably raised the rent, so that he was nearly ruined. “My good friend,” said the landlord, “why did you not come before? I don’t wish that any man should be ruined through me. Let the rent be taken down to anything you think fair.”

“But,” said the man, “I spoke to your bailiff. I did not dare to come to speak to a gentleman like you.” “Oh,” said he, “farmer, you are very welcome.” But before the farmer left, he took him to see a chapel where there were all sorts of pictures. The farmer was rather startled and asked to know what they meant. “Why,” said the landlord “these are the priests and these are the saints. I put up my prayers to them and then they intercede with Jesus Christ in my behalf.”

The farmer laughed. The landlord asked him why and he said, “I was thinking it could be a pretty bit of business. It would be doing very much the same as I did. I went round to your bailiff and to your friends and I never got any redress till I came to yourself, Sir. So you may go round to all these very fine ladies and gentlemen you call saints and I believe you will never get much from them, till you go to the Lord Himself and present your petition direct to Him. And if you do, I believe you will have a very good chance of success.”

This is a singular British-like mode of illustration but it is sufficient, I think, to put aside the idea of going to saints in order to intercede with God. The fact of worshipping saints, of trusting my salvation in the hands of men and thinking that any persons can forgive my sins, is to my soul abhorrent beyond abhorrence and hideous beyond horror. We should “ascribe greatness to our God”—to Him and Him alone.

Very possibly, however, what I have said of that matter will be agreed to by all of you and the arrow will fly into other breasts than yours. Allow me, therefore, to make the remark that in Protestant countries there is a very strong tendency to priest-craft still. Though we do not bow down and worship images and do not professedly put our souls into the hands of priests, yet, I am sorry to say it, there is scarce a congregation that is free from that error of ascribing greatness to their minister.

If souls are converted how very prone we are to think there is something marvelous in the *man*! And if saints are fed and satisfied with marrow and fatness how prone we are to suppose that the *preacher* has something about him by which these wondrous things are done! And if a revival takes place in any part of the vineyard, it matters not in what denomination, there is an aptness in the human mind to ascribe some part of the glory and the praise to the mere human agency. Oh, Beloved, I am sure every right-minded minister will scorn the thought.

We are but your servants for *Christ's* sake. We speak to you, by God's grace, what we believe to be God's Truth—but ascribe not to *us* any honor or any glory. If by anything a soul is saved, God from first to last has done it. If your souls are fed, thank the Master. Be respectful and grateful to the servant as you can be, but most of all thank Him who puts the Word into the mouths of His servants and who applies it to your heart. “Oh, down with priest-craft!” Even I myself must down with it. Down with it!” If I myself like Samson fall beneath its roof let me fall myself and be crushed, well content in having pulled down or contributed to remove one solitary brick in that colossal house of Satan. Take care, Friends, that you put no honor upon any *man* that you ought to have ascribed unto your God. “Ascribe greatness to our God.”

There is, too, in our land of freedom somewhat of a tendency to ascribe greatness to kings and mighty men. We are most of us professedly democrats. We generally talk democratically when we get together. But there is not an Englishman that is much of a democrat after all. When we get by a noble lord, how we do look up to him, as if he were some angel come down from on high! How we defer to the man who bears a title and whatever he might state we should have scarcely the honesty to tell him the truth, because he added, “Duke,” or “Lord,” to his name. Why,

my Friends, in this world we seldom judge men as to *character*. We judge them as to *rank*.

The poor and honest man shall go through the streets—will you crowd to see him? A man shall wear a crown who is a perjurer—and will you not rush out and clap your hands at him? You judge according to rank and not according to character. Would God we all knew how to judge men not according to the sight of our eyes, or the hearing of our ears, but according to the rightness of their characters. Oh, honor the Queen. God has said so in his Word. Pay deference unto authorities as you should do. But if in anything they swerve, remember your knee must bow to God and to God alone. If in anything there is anything wrong, though it should have a sovereign's name attached to it, remember, only one is your Master, one is your King, "King of kings and Lord of lords." Ascribe not greatness unto emperors and monarchs—"Ascribe you greatness unto our God" and unto our God alone.

In the case of those who are in the employ of masters it is but just and right that they should render unto their masters that which is their due. But when the master commands that which is wrong, allow me solemnly to caution you against giving to him anything which you are not bound to do. Your master tells you you must break the Sabbath. You do it because he is your master. You have violated this command, for it is said, "Ascribe you greatness unto *God*."

You are tempted in your employment to commit a fault. You are *commanded* to do it. You are irresolute. You waver for a moment. You say, shall I obey God or man? At last, you say, "My master said so, I must obey him, or I shall lose my employment." Remember you have not ascribed greatness unto God when you say that. Rather say this—"In all things that are right, I am the servant of all men, but in things that are wrong, I will not yield. I will stand up steadfast for God's right and for God's commands. Men may be my masters when they tell me to do the thing that is honest and the thing that is just, but if in anything they swerve from that, I will not break my heavenly Master's command. He is more my Master than they—I will stand firm and fast by Him."

How many young men are tempted from the path they ought to pursue by those who exercise influence upon them? How many a young woman has been turned aside from rectitude by some command which has been given her by a person who had influence over her? Take care that you allow no man to get dominion over your conscience. Remember you will have no excuse at the Day of Judgment. It will be no palliation of your guilt to say that you were commanded by man to do wrong. For God will reply to you—"I told you to ascribe greatness to Me and to Me only and

inasmuch as you obeyed man rather than God, you have violated My command.” “Ascribe greatness to our God.” Take that caution—believe it—and receive it in your daily life and in your dealing with great and small.

This text has a bearing upon certain philosophic creeds which I will just hint at here. Some men, instead of ascribing greatness to God ascribe greatness to the laws of nature and to certain powers and forces which they believe govern the universe. They look up on high. Their eyes sees the marvelous orbs walking in their mystery along the sky. They take the telescope and peer into the distance and they see yet more marvelous orbs, some of them of fire and others of a structure they cannot understand. And they say, “What stupendous laws are those which govern the universe!”

And you will see in their writings that they ascribe everything to *law* and nothing to God. Now, all this is wrong. Law without God is nothing. God puts force into law and if God acts by laws in the government of the material universe, it is still the force of God which moves the worlds along and keeps them in their places. Law without God is nullity. Reject every philosophy that does not ascribe greatness to God for there is a worm at the root of it. There is some cancer at its heart and it yet shall be destroyed. That and that alone shall stand which ascribes “greatness unto our God.”

2. So far by way of caution. Now by way of COMMAND. “Ascribe greatness to our God.”

This command comes to the sinner when he first begins seriously to consider his position before God. My Friend, you have never thought of Heaven or of Hell until this moment, except it is a casual thought which is offensive to you. You are now in God’s house and perhaps you are inclined to think of your own position. You remember that you are standing upon a narrow neck of land between two unbounded seas—

**“A point of time, a moment’s space
May land you in yon heavenly place.
Or shut you up in Hell.”**

I hope you are asking yourself, “How can I be saved?” I beseech you in the very outset of that question take this for your guide—“Ascribe greatness to our God.” By this I mean when you look at your sins, ascribe greatness to God’s justice. Do not do as some who say, “It is true, I have rebelled against God, but then very likely He will not punish me.” Be not as some who suppose that God’s justice is such a thing of willow that it can easily bend to justify without satisfaction and pardon without atonement.

Remember this as undoubted Truth—our God is very great in justice. Solemnly I assure you from God’s holy Word that He is just, that He will by no means clear the guilty unless they are cleared by Jesus Christ. If you have sinned but one sin, God will punish you for it. If you have sinned but one hour, that one hour will damn your soul despite all your repentance and all your good works—unless the blood of Jesus Christ shall take the sins away. Remember God cannot pass by sin without expressing His displeasure and either on your shoulders, or else on those of Christ the lash must fall—for fall somewhere it must. God must punish every sin. He must punish every crime.

And unless you have confidence that Christ suffered for you—remember He is very great—the whole of His wrath, every drop of the shower of His anger must fall on your poor helpless head and every word of His awful curse must sink deep into your inmost heart. He is a very great God. He is not like the little kings of earth who sometimes pass by sin without punishment. But He is severely just and strict towards all offenders. He says, “I *will* punish you for your sin.” “The soul that sins it shall die.” Start with that then when you begin to think of being saved.

Next to this, addressing the sinner who is already convicted of this sad and solemn thought, let me say, “Ascribe greatness unto our God”—that is, to His mercy. My Friend, you are sensible that you are guilty. Conscience has had its work with your soul. You are certain that if God is just He must punish you. You are well aware He cannot pass by your iniquities without exhibiting His wrath concerning them. Maybe under a sense of guilt you will cry, “My sins are too great to be pardoned.” Stop! Stop! Put Jesus Christ’s blood upon them and my life for yours, my soul for yours, they are not too great.

Instead of ascribing greatness to your *sin*, ascribe greatness to our *God*. Remember, if in coming to God as a penitent you think that His mercy is little, you dishonor Him. If you suppose that the blood of Christ is not capable of washing out your blackest crime you dishonor the glorious atonement of Christ. Whenever you doubt you defraud God of His honor for remember He has said it, “Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.”

Come, poor Sinner and ascribe greatness to God’s mercy. Believe that His arms are wide—believe that His love is deep. Believe that His grace is broad—believe that He is all-powerful to take away your vilest sin and wash you of your crimson guilt. “Ascribe greatness to our God.” Be convinced of His great mercy, you seeking souls who want Christ and know not where to find Him. Further let me appeal to the Christian. “Ascribe greatness to our God.”

And you who are in trouble. Dear fellow-laborers, you are wearied with the hardness of your journey. Your poverty has got hold of you. Your troubles are multiplied and increased. It is a dark night with you just now. You see not your sins. You have no sweet promise to light upon—no cheering Word to reassure your poor desponding heart. Come, here is a text for you—“Ascribe greatness to our God.” Great as your troubles are, remember He is greater. If the darkness is very thick, remember the mountain stands as firm at night as in the day. And when clouds girdle His Throne, yet they never shake its basement—

***“Firm as the earth His promise stands,
And He can well secure
What you commit into His hands,
Till the decisive hour.”***

Never think your trials are too huge for Him. Take them to Him. Cast them on the Lord. Trust Him with them all. His everlasting shoulders, that, like Atlas, bear the world, did never totter yet, nor shall they. Cast the whole roll of your troubles at His door—He will relieve you. Take the whole bundle of your sorrows, cast them at His feet, He can take them all away. And when the devil tempts you to believe that God cannot help you, tell him that you think better of Him than that. You ascribe greatness to the Almighty and you believe He is great enough to deliver you from all your sorrows.

Perhaps just now you are engaged in prayer. You have been for weeks and months agonizing at the Throne. You have had but little success there. Well, as you go to the mercy seat, take this with you “Ascribe greatness to our God.” We often get but little from God because we think Him a little God. We ask very little of God at times and therefore we get little. He who in prayer believes God to be great and asks of God as if He were great shall be certain to get many mercies from Him. Little faith gets little answers but great faith believes God’s greatness and says—

***“I am coming to a King,
Large petitions I will bring;
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much.”***

Thus in *prayer* ascribe greatness unto God. Do you ask a hundred? Ask a thousand. Have you asked a thousand? Ask ten thousand. Oh, I beseech you never stint for faith nor stint for desire. God has said, “Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.” Remember the king of Israel. The Prophet came to him and gave him the bow and arrows. Said he, “Shoot with the bow and arrows.” And he shot once or twice and then he stayed his hand.

And the Prophet said, “You should have shot again and again and then you would have smitten all the Assyrians until you had destroyed them.” Even so does God. When He gives us faith He puts the bow and arrows into our hands. Oh, do not smite once or twice! Smite many times and you shall smite your sins until you have destroyed them. Draw the long bow of prayer—shoot your arrow as far as ever you can. Ask nothing small. In small petitions you suppose Him to be a small giver. Ask greatly and He will give greatly. “Ascribe greatness to our God.”

But I hope you are today engaged in *duty*. You have the duty thrust upon you by Providence which you do not flee from. Like Jonah you are half a mind to go to Tarshish instead of going to Nineveh, for you are afraid your strength will never bear you up in so huge a labor as that which has fallen to your share. Stop! Pay not your fare to Tarshish, else winds shall pursue you. Believe this—

**“Weak as you are,
Yet through His might,
All things you can perform.”**

And believing go forward. Go forward and stop at nothing. If God should call me to break the Alps in sunder, let it please Him to give me faith. I believe He would give me strength to do it. If God were to call you, as He did Joshua, to stop the sun in its course and seize His golden bridle and bid His coursers stay their hasty race, you would have strength enough to do it. “Ascribe greatness to our God.”

If like Luther had to brave the Vatican and breast the storm, if God intended you for the work, He would give you grace to stand in it. And if your trial should be one of persecution, if you are called to the stake, you need not fear to march boldly to it and embrace it—for He who called you to die will give you dying grace, will give you burning grace—so that you shall endure in the midst of hideous torments and terrific pains. “Ascribe greatness to our God.” Yes, greatness made more great in the midst of creature weakness.

And now, to close, there is one point I wish to urge upon your attention tonight. Wherever I go it is the almost universal complaint that the former times were better than now. Everywhere it is the solemn conviction of Christians that the Church is in a very wrong position. Go where you please you will hear one confession, one doleful, lamentable groan, that the Church is cold and lifeless. Not dead, but Laodicean—and I believe that Laodicea is the most correct picture of the Church at the present moment. We are neither hot nor cold and Christ is angry with us. Where is the zeal—the zeal of Whitfield? Ah, where are the men that weep for perishing sinners? Where are the ministers that weep for souls as if they were full of life or death?

Where are the Baxters now, whose knees shake when they climb their pulpit stairs because they feel how solemn is their position and whose cheeks are glittered with tears because they know the doom of perishing sinners and long to snatch them from the fire? Where are your Rowland Hills now who descend to common language to reach the common people? Yes, and where are your praying men and praying women?

There are many of them—but where are those who pray with all their hearts as if they meant it? Ah, Heaven knows, the Church is just now where it ought not to be. But, oh, Christians, sit not down in despair. Think not that God has given us over. “Ascribe greatness to our God.” In the very worst of times God can bring us out again. In the times of Arius, when the world was gone aside to disbelieve the divinity of Christ, God provided an Athanasius who in bold stern language put to flight the Arians and stood up for God.

When the world had gone aside to Pelagianism He found an Augustine who uttered the words of grace and delivered the world from that mesh of errors. When the Church had gone into foul delusions, there was the monk found who shook the world—the Luther to proclaim the Truth. And when the doctrines needed purity, there was the Calvin to cast salt into the troubled craters and make them calm and limpid, so that to the very bottom man could see.

And when in later times the Church *of* England and the Church *in* England had sunken very low, all men said God had given up His church. But there were found six young men in the college of Oxford. God only knows how they came there and how they were converted. Those six—Wesley and Whitfield being of the number—waked the world again from its dark and long slumber. And when we had relapsed again, God found the successors of Whitfield—the Romains, the Topladys, the John Newtons, the Rowland Hills—men like Christmas Evans, like John Berridge.

These came to bear the standard of the Lord and to support His Truth. And mark you now, God has got the man somewhere. Yes, the MEN somewhere and they will come out yet. There will be a shaking one of these days. The men shall come yet to move the Church once more. We shall not forever sleep. We shall not forever lie still. There will be a revival throughout this land, I do believe, such as our fathers never saw. The times shall come when the heavens shall give one and shall hear the call and shall send down rain, when the earth shall blossom with righteousness and the heavens shall drop with dew. For that time we all heartily pray, for the time we earnestly wait. “Ascribe greatness to our God.”

To my own Church and people, only one word and then farewell. My Friends, we also are about to engage in an enterprise for which I fear we are not quite competent. But remember God will provide for us. Often on my bed do I toss restlessly by night to know what is to become of all these people. Where is my Church to be housed and where my congregation to be gathered? And but last night in unbelief I thought it never could be that such a place could be built. But ah, always “ascribe you greatness to God.” Let us *attempt* great things. And we shall *do* great things. Let us try at them and *God being with us*, we shall do them yet. If I had cared to preach in fine and gaudy language I might perhaps have done it. But I have cared only to speak just as common people do.

I often tell tales that shock propriety—I shall do it again. I often do things that others condemn me for—I shall do worse still, God helping me. If I can but win souls by them, I am not to be daunted by any opinion whatever. If heirs of Heaven are snatched from Hell I shall rejoice to have done it by any means in the world. Well, then, if I am ever to have the poor around me then will I trust in God, in His poor and in His church that they will yet raise a tabernacle where His name is to be honored. Lay it to your hearts and if you think it is God’s work, go about it with faith and with vigor. “Ascribe you greatness to our God.”

Oh, you that hate my God. You that despise Him. The day is coming—perhaps tomorrow shall be the day when you shall ascribe greatness to my God! For you shall feel His great foot upon your loins and His great sword shall cut you in sunder. His great wrath shall utterly devour you and His great Hell shall be your doleful home forever.

May God grant it may not be so and may He save us all for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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

MAN'S EXTREMITY, GOD'S OPPORTUNITY NO. 2717

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 10, 1901.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 25, 1880.

*“For the LORD shall judge His people, and repent Himself for
His servants, when He sees that their power is gone,
and there is none shut up, or left.”
Deuteronomy 32:36*

THE same event may happen alike to all, yet it may have a very different meaning to different individuals. Ungodly men are brought low by affliction or poverty, for sinners have no immunity from suffering. Saints, also, are led into trying circumstances, for the utmost holiness will not preserve any man from trial. But what a difference there is between the downfall of the prosperous sinner and of the man whom God loves! The wicked man who continues in his wickedness, falls forever. But the righteous man, though he may fall seven times, rises up again, for he shall not fall finally. How dreadful is the language of Jehovah when speaking of the ungodly! “To Me belongs vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.”

The wicked man who prospers in this world carries his head very high. He is proud and conceited, and he treads the poor under his feet. His career seems to be one of uninterrupted prosperity—higher, and higher, and higher, and yet higher he mounts—he becomes more wealthy and famous and, meanwhile, he also becomes more boastful and more arrogant towards God. He asks, “Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?” He breathes defiance again at the Most High. His heart grows harder and harder, like the heart of Pharaoh. Do you see where he is now? He has climbed to the very mountain's brow. He is rejoicing that he has reached the topmost pinnacle of fame. Who can ever pull him down from that height? Who can even disturb his peace? Wait a while. Tarry but a brief season. High places are full of danger and the terrible prophecy shall yet be fulfilled in his experience—and in that of many others who are like he—“Their feet shall slide in due time”—and when men in such a position begin to slip and slide, their fall is irrevocable! Down, down they go, falling from precipice to precipice, until they are utterly broken in pieces.

Am I addressing any man who thinks that he is beyond the reach of the arrows of the Almighty? Before another week has passed over your

head, Sir, you may lie gazing into eternity—and the joints of your loins shall be loosed as you begin to realize that you must so soon stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ! Vain, then, will be all your wealth and all your wit! You may now deride the godly who seek mercy at the hands of God, but *then* you will cry out worse than they have ever done! You have often, in your pride, mocked them in the hour of their distress. But, in the day of your calamity, it may be that before you shall have even time to present one prayer to God, your foot shall slide, you will find yourself lost, and forever have to wring your hands in anguish at your own folly in having despised eternal love and rejected the mercy of God in Christ Jesus!

I would not change places with the greatest man who is living without the Savior! If I could have the whole world given to me. If I could be the possessor of a thousand worlds and yet live for a single moment without having my sin forgiven, and without the love of God shed abroad in my heart, it would be a living death to me! I think it would be so with each one of you and it would be if you carefully thought the matter over. I invite you to do so and I earnestly ask you to imagine how dreadful must be the doom of an ungodly man. When he dies, he sinks into the abyss of Hell! When his light goes out, there is no means of lighting it again! The tenfold midnight, thick as Egypt's darkness, shall never be broken by the gleaming of a solitary star of hope. I want you to think all the more of this solemn Truth of God because I am going to speak of others who do fall very low, and suffer very much, yet, after all, their descent is followed by an ascent—their declining leads to a revival, for, according to our text, "the Lord shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when He sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left."

I. I shall apply the text, first of all, to THE LORD'S OWN CHURCH.

It may relate to *any sorely-trying church*. I may be addressing some Brothers and Sisters, up from the country, who are members of churches that are sadly declining. If that is the case, let me remind you, dear Friends, that God may have a true church which is very severely tried. The track of the ship of the church has lain full often over very boisterous waters. Sometimes the sea has seethed and the billows have boiled through the fury of persecution—the prow of the vessel has been crimsoned with blood, but onward has she moved! Still has the Divine wind speeded her on her way and, despite the kings of the earth, and all the infernal tortures that Rome's inquisitors could invent, the sturdy ship has gone straight on towards her desired haven! The days of persecution have not yet ceased, but when any churches are brought very low through the attacks of cruel enemies, there is still hope for them in this promise of the living God.

What is even far worse for a church than persecution, it may be diminished and brought low through the folly of its own members. My eyes could weep day and night over some churches that I know, which seem to me to be determined to commit spiritual suicide. They fall to quarrelling, when they are weak enough, already, and need what little strength

they have for fighting against the common foe. Often they divide into parties about nothing at all and where there should be unbroken brotherhood, there is an absence of anything like Christian love and, therefore, the Spirit of God departs from them.

Many churches are, alas, brought low through a faulty ministry. A ministry that does not ring out in tones as clear as a clarion, "Salvation by Grace, through faith in the precious blood of Jesus Christ," is an impoverishing ministry. If there is no nourishing food for the soul, how can it be in spiritual health? Where will the gathering of the people be if the Shiloh is not present? If Christ is absent from the assembly, is not everything lacking that can build up a true Christian Church? In many and many a place that I know of, the members of the church have become few and feeble because the ministry has not fed their souls. And, sometimes, a church may get down so very low that it appears as if it would become altogether extinct. One is afraid that the doors of the chapel will have to be closed, that the altar-fire will go out and that the testimony for God will cease in that particular hamlet, or village, or township.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, if any of you are members of such a church as that, what you have to make sure of is that it is a Church of Christ and that *you* are God's people and God's servants, for our text speaks of God's favor to, "His people" and, "His servants." This passage does not apply to every nominal church, nor to every conglomeration of merely moral men who call themselves Christians—but it does concern every real Church of God, however low it may have been brought.

When you are in such a state as this, what you have to do is to lay the condition of the church to heart and to cry unto God to raise it up again. Use every possible and right means to bring a revival, but if your way is blocked and there seems to be no possibility of success attending your efforts, then fall back upon this text and plead it with God in prayer—"For the Lord shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when He sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left."

For, next, *if you pray in faith, God will return to you*. I believe that half-a-dozen persons with vital religion in their souls, and really in earnest, may pray a church right out of any ditch into which it may have fallen, or bring it even from the sepulcher where it has been buried—and make it live again in fullness of life! Only there must be an intense determination that it shall be so and real anguish and travail of soul until the desired end is attained. The fact that the church has come to her extremity of weakness should cheer you, rather than drive you to despair, for when a thing is so low that it cannot get any lower, there is some consolation in that fact. Now is the time to hope that the tide will turn! If it has ebbed out to the very uttermost, now let us trust that it will soon begin to flow again! I do not know whether the common saying is true, that the darkest hour of the night is that which precedes the dawn of day, but let us hope that it is so with your church and that, when it has got very, very, very low, it has reached its limit of weakness—and that God will raise it up again.

There are some friends, whom I meet every now and then, who tell me that there are very dreadful times coming upon the world. I am not sure that they are right in all their forecasts, but one thing I do know, and that is, if ever the Church of God should get into a worse state than she has ever yet been in, if I am alive at such a time, I will still call together the last, half-dozen faithful ones if I am one of them, and I will get them to read with me this verse, "For the Lord shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when He sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left."

You remember that when John Huss was being burned to death, he said, "Within a hundred years, there will come a man whom the persecutors will not be able to burn." The word Huss used was, *goose*, and he said, "there will come a swan that you will never be able to roast"—that was Martin Luther, who was many times in great peril, and yet was not killed by the persecutors. When he was converted, the world was as spiritually dark as it well could be, yet God then found, even in the monastery, a monk whose preaching of the Gospel shook the world! Never be afraid of the ultimate issue of the great battle! God will beat the devil yet. Never admit into your mind, thoughts that shall lead you to despond concerning the end of the conflict. The battle is the Lord's and He will yet give the victory to His Gospel. If some of the young people here should live to see all those who now preach the Gospel laid in the silent grave. If any of you should live to see this place of worship empty. If ever this pulpit should cease to resound with the Gospel of Christ, do not give up hope, my Brothers and Sisters! Still stick together, even if there are only a few of you left, and cry mightily unto God, pleading the promise of our text, for He will remember you, and will, "repent Himself for His servants," and His cause shall yet again revive!

II. Now, in the second place, I want to show you that our text is applicable to THE TRIED BELIEVER. I may be addressing someone to whom these words of Moses shall drop as the rain and distil as the dew.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, God may bring His people, in the order of His Providence, into such a state that "*their power is gone.*" Apparently they are in such a condition that they are quite unable to help themselves. They have struggled against many difficulties, but, at last, the difficulties have proved more than a match for them. All earthly help has quite failed them. To quote the words of the text, "their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left." No garrison left in the city, no soldier left in the field, no helper anywhere. You may be like Job who had no friends left, except the miserable comforters who spoke more like enemies than friends. You are not the first of God's servants whose power is gone and whose friends are gone!

The worst about your trial may be that it may seem to you, and seem truly, that *some of your suffering is the result of sin.* You may not have been walking with God as you ought to have done. Your heart may have grown cold so that which has come upon you may be a chastisement for your wandering. It may be a rod in the hand of your loving Father, smiting you because of your folly. But I beseech you, now that all *human*

power is gone, do not run away from God, but fly to Him! Do not give up your hope in Him! However deplorable your circumstances may be, let them drive you to God—not from Him. Your only hope now lies in the compassion of your God. Let me read this text to you again, and I pray that your faith may enable you to grasp it—“For the Lord shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when He sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left.” There is a gracious purpose behind your present trial, even though you do not yet perceive it.

It is possible that it was absolutely necessary that you should be brought as low as you are *in order to cure you of your sin*. You have come to your last shilling, have you? I have known a doctor to keep his patients almost without food, and bring the man down every low in order to starve out the complaint from which he was suffering. And in a surgical case, the knife has had to go in very deeply so as to get at the roots of the cancer. In like manner, it may be that it was necessary that your affliction should not be stopped midway, but should be allowed to proceed to the bitter end in order that it might be the means of curing you of the evils which were rankling in your spirit.

Possibly, too, the affliction was permitted to develop to the uttermost *in order that you might be induced to return to your God*. It may be that in your prosperity you had grown so careless and so fond of the world—and you had so little delight in God—that it was necessary for you to have your gourds withered and your flowers all made to decay in order that you might, in your abject distress, turn again to your God.

Or it may be that God intends that *you should forever bear a testimony to His faithfulness such as no ordinary man can bear*. Those people who only sail in a little boat on a lake have no stories to tell of adventures at sea. But he who is to write a book describing long voyages must travel far out of sight of land and behold the sea in the time of storm, as well as in a calm. You are to become, perhaps, an experienced Christian—you are to bring great honor to God by being the means of comforting others who will be tried in a similar way to yours. You are to be trained into a hero, and that cannot be done except by great and bitter griefs coming upon you. I believe that there are some of us whom God cannot trust with much joy. If we carry much sail, His wisdom and His love compel Him to give us also much ballast, or else we shall be blown over. There must be many a man who knows within himself that he cannot be trusted with success. His head would turn dizzy if he were set upon a high pinnacle and he would get proud, and self-sufficient, and so be ruined. God will not kill His children with sweets any more than He will destroy them with bitters. They shall have a tonic when they need it, but when that tonic is so bitter that they seem as if they could not drink it and live, their Lord will either take the tonic away, or give them some delicious sweetness to remove all the bitter taste.

I will read the text to you again. I cannot preach from it as I should like to do, but the text itself is full of comfort to the Lord's own chosen ones who are in sore straits. “For the Lord shall judge His people, and

repent Himself for His servants, when He sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left." Tried child of God, I wish I could grasp your hand in tender sympathy and whisper in your ear, "In your lowest moments, do not despair. 'Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? No, verily, for the Lord will not cast off forever. But though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies.' 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.' The Lord Himself says to you, 'I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.' 'When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.' 'He shall deliver you in six troubles: yes, in seven there shall no evil touch you.' 'Therefore, if you walk in darkness, and see no light, trust in the Lord, and stay yourself upon your God, for He will have compassion upon you; He will take away His wrath and smile again upon your soul, and turn your lamentation into singing, and your mourning into dancing.'"

III. This must suffice for the tried child of God, for I want to show that the text also applies to THE CONVICTED SINNER.

Are there any of you who cannot say that you are the children of God, but who wish that you were? I said to one, the other day, "Are you a Christian?" and he replied, "No, Sir, but oh, how I wish that I were!" When I heard with what emphasis he spoke, I thought that he must not be far from the Kingdom of God, for is not he who wishes to be a Christian, almost one already? Is there not the beginning of a work of Grace in his heart which the Holy Spirit will carry on to completion? So I will read the text now to you who wish to be saved, but fear that you shall not be, for you have had a dreadful sense of sin—"For the Lord shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when He sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left."

Do these words describe your present condition? First, *is your self-righteousness all gone?* A few months ago you were a fine fellow according to your own estimate. You thought that there were few as good as you. But tonight you came slinking in as if you felt afraid even to sit down with the people of God! You remember that line of the hymn—

"Then look, Sinner—look unto Him, and be saved"—

and you feel that you would like to look to the Crucified One. You can go as far as that but you cannot yet say that you have looked unto Him and that you are saved, for you have such an awful sense of your guilt in the sight of God. I know you, my Friend. I "know the heart of a stranger," for such was my heart in the time of my conviction on account of sin. Oh, the heaviness of a guilty conscience! Oh, the long, dark, dreary winter of the soul, when sin blots out the sun, turns even mercy into misery, and sorrow makes the day into night! Ah, I know you, my Brother, my Sister—your self-righteousness is all gone and I am glad of it! I rejoice that the Lord has broken the iron sinew of your neck and that your fine feathers and ornaments have all been stripped off you, and that you have

put on sackcloth in place of your former comely array. The Lord help you to keep it on till Jesus Christ takes it off, for it is fit livery for a sinner to wear!

Then, next, you say that *your power is all gone*. Not many months ago you thought that you could believe in the Lord Jesus Christ whenever you liked—that it was the easiest thing in all the world to become a Christian—and that you would trust the Savior some fine day or other, whenever you pleased. Yet, at this moment, you are sighing, “I would, but can’t believe. Lord, relieve my load of guilt! All my help must come from You.” You are the gentleman who was going to conquer his evil temper and give up his bad habits—and be a saint and do it all yourself! Oh, yes, yes! Then you thought you could do anything and everything! But now you have come to realize that, apart from Christ, you can do nothing! Only the other morning, when you got up, you prayed to God and you thought that you would lead a very good life throughout that whole day, yet you were out of temper before breakfast was over! You went to your business and you were going to be quite an example there—and a pretty example you were! You felt that as you went home at night, all your attempts to be better and to do right had failed. I am glad you have learned your weakness and I hope that your consciousness of weakness will become deeper and more painful, for, until every bone in your body is broken, I am afraid that you will not turn to God! You are, I fear, one of the men who, as long as they can lift a little finger to help themselves, will still put all their trust in their little finger and will not turn to the Strong for strength! To cure them of that evil, you must grind them to powder! You must do with them what Solomon says concerning the fool, bray them “in a mortar among wheat with a pestle,” before you can get this folly of supposed self-strength out of them! Even then, sometimes every atom of their ground and pounded being still seems to say, “I am somebody, after all.” So it is a blessed thing when God makes us to know that all our power is gone.

Is my text true concerning any of you? “Their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.” Are you brought to such a pass that *you have not anything in the whole world that you dare to rely upon*? You look back upon all your Church attendance and your Chapel attendance, but you dare not rely upon them, for you feel that you have been a hypocrite in the House of God, and that your heart has not been right towards Him. You look back upon your attempts to pray—for you have been trying to pray lately—but you feel as if you could not pray aright. The words stuck in your throat, and the very desires were dead within your spirit. Have you come to such a pass that when you read the Bible, it condemns you? And when you hear the Gospel, the preacher seems as if he excluded you from its provisions? Is it so? Is there no ray of hope for you anywhere? You used to have some kind of hope in reserve, some secret, mysterious confidence that still buoyed you up—is that all gone? Do you realize that you are lost? Do you know that the sentence of death has been pronounced against you? Do you even begin to wonder why it has not been

executed? Do you seem to feel in your heart the working of the Spirit, as if even now He would take you away and cast you into Hell?

Blessed be the Lord if you have come to such a pass as that! Your extremity is God's opportunity! The difficulty all along has been to get to the end of you, for when a man gets to the end of himself, he has reached the beginning of God's working! When you are cleaned right out and have not anything at all left, then all the mercy of the Covenant of Grace is yours! I may have doubts about whether God's Grace will be exercised in certain cases, but I cannot raise any question about the freeness of Divine Grace to a soul that is empty, to a soul that is ready to perish, to a soul that is enquiring after God, to a soul that is hungering and thirsting after righteousness! If you, poor Sinner, are covered with leprosy from head to foot. If, though the priest should thoroughly examine you, he would have to declare that there is not one sound speck in you even of the size of a pin's head, let me tell you what the Law of God itself says—you are clean! Therefore go your way. When once your soul is so conscious of your sin that every hope of salvation by your own works is entirely abandoned and you feel that you are utterly condemned, then is Jesus Christ yours, for He came not to call the righteous, but sinners. So, accept Him as yours! Take Him, receive Him now! He is made of God, fullness to our emptiness, righteousness to our unrighteousness, life to our death, salvation to our condemnation, all in all to our poverty, our wretchedness, our sin!

Now let me read the text to you yet once more and see if God the Holy Spirit does not press it home upon your conscience and heart. "For the Lord shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when He sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left." There is no hope for you except in the pity of God, no hope except in His mercy, and no hope of mercy except in the freeness of His mercy. And no hope, even, of the freeness of mercy except in the Sovereignty of God who has mercy on those upon whom He will have mercy, and who gives His Grace to the most unworthy, that it may be proved to be all the greater Grace because it saves the very chief of sinners! If there is one of you who says, "I am the most unlikely man in all the world ever to be saved. I have the least claim upon God of any man that lives. The only claim I have is the right to be damned, for I have so grievously transgressed against God. I feel myself to be so guilty that my only claim upon justice is the demand to be tried, condemned, and executed." If you really mean what you say, then you are the man to whom the Gospel of the Grace of God is specially sent, for it is written, "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet perhaps, for a good (a benevolent) man some would even dare to die. But God commends His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

He gave Himself for our sins, not for our righteousness! And He, Himself, said, "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Trust Christ, you who dare not trust yourself! Fling yourself, all broken

to pieces, at the feet of the broken-hearted Savior and He will turn again, and have compassion upon you. Yes, look unto Him and live, for—

***“There is life for a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for you!”***

Give but one believing glance at that dear dying Son of God and you shall hear Him say to you, “Go your way; your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you.” The LORD grant it, for His name’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
DEUTERONOMY 32:1-43.**

Verse 1. *Give ear, O you heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.* Because men are so slow of hearing, Moses calls on the heavens and the earth to bear witness against them. And because of the sublimity of his subject, he calls upon the heavens and the earth to pay attention to it.

2. *My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.* It is good preaching, and good hearing, too, when the Gospel comes like a gentle shower which saturates and soaks into the soil and refreshes and makes it fruitful. May God the Holy Spirit make it to be so whenever we gather together for worship! The Word of the Lord may be as a driving hail, breaking everything upon which it falls, and so becoming the savor of death unto death. But may God make it to us as the dew and the small rain from Heaven, that it may be a savor of life unto life!

3-5. *Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe you greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He. They have corrupted themselves.* What a contrast there is between the incorruptible and immutable God and corruptible man! “They have corrupted themselves.”

5. *Their spot is not the spot of His children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.* God’s children have spots—the spot caused by sin which are recognized, mourned over, and struggled against by them. The ungodly have the same sort of spots but they have no repentance concerning the sin which causes them.

6. *Do you thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? Is not He your Father that has bought you? Has He not made you, and established you?* Sin is the basest form of ingratitude. We owe everything to God, and we ought, therefore, to treat Him as our Creator and Father should be treated. On the contrary, how often have we requited Him evil for good, and acted as if we regarded Him as our enemy rather than as our best Friend?

7, 8. *Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.* His first thought was concerning His

own people. He provided Canaan for them. It was just the very land for them, with space enough, and yet with not too much room, so that they might cultivate it all and prove it to be a land flowing with milk and honey. Yet these special thoughts of God with regard to His own chosen people did not exclude kind thoughts towards the rest of mankind, for "He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people," that is, the people belonging to other nations. But, still, His deepest and His highest thoughts were concerning the children of Israel.

9, 10. *For the LORD'S portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye.* And is not this also a true description of God's love and kindness to you and to me, Beloved in the Lord? Did He not find us in the wilderness? Has He not led us about, and by our experience instructed us, and has He not guarded us with as much watchful care as a man bestows upon the apple of his eye? Oh, blessed be His holy name, we owe everything to Him! He gives us everything that we have.

11-14. *As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them on her wings: so the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and He made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock, butter of cows, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys, of wheat; and you did drink the pure blood of the grape.* God fed His ancient people with the best of the best, and gave it to them with no stinted hand. And, oh, when I think of the spiritual food which God has prepared for His people, surely "butter of cows, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs," and all such carnal things are but poor in comparison with the provisions of His Grace! In a spiritual sense, the Lord has indeed given to us "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." But now look again at the contrast between the Lord and His ancient people. God's great goodness makes man's sin appear all the blacker—

15. *But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: you are waxen fat, you are grown thick, you are covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.* Many can endure the trials of adversity who cannot escape the perils of prosperity. Solomon truly said, "As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise." And many a man has failed in that time of testing. When you come to be wealthy, to be admired, to receive honor among men, then is the time of your severest trial.

16, 17. *They provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they Him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.* Moses multiples expressions to show the folly of Israel's idolatry. Only think of "new gods that came newly up," as if that which is new could be a god! The same thing may be said of the

“new truth” of which we hear so much about nowadays. That which is new cannot be true. Certainly, there is nothing new in theology but that which is utterly false. The idols which the Israelites worshipped were not only new gods, but they were strange gods, which their fathers feared not. Worse than that, they were demons—“they sacrificed unto devils, not to God.” How low had even the chosen people sunk!

18-27. *Of the Rock that begat you, you are unmindful, and have forgotten God that formed you. And when the LORD saw it, He abhorred them, because of the provoking of His sons, and of His daughters. And He said, I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very stubborn generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved Me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked Me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in My anger, and shall burn unto the lowest Hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them, I will spend My arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without and terror within shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs. I said, I would scatter them into corners. I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: were it not—Here is a sweet Word of Grace amid the just judgments of Jehovah. “Were it not”—*

27. *That I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the LORD has not done all this. So He spared them for His own name's sake and, to this day, when God can find no other reason for showing mercy to the guilty, He does it for His name's sake. And this is a blessed plea to be urged by a man who can see no reason why God should have mercy upon him! He may say, “Lord, do it for Your name's sake, to make Your Grace and Your mercy illustrious in the salvation of such a poor, hopeless wretch as I am.”*

28-32. *For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up? For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges. For their vine—That is, the vine of God's enemies—*

32-34. *Is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter: their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps. Is not this laid up in store with Me, and sealed up among My treasures? What a striking and startling question that is, as though God laid up the memory of man's sin, sealed it up, and kept it in a secret place against the day when He shall call sinners to account, and visit them for their iniquities! What an awful*

thing it is to have the sins of one's youth laid up, sealed up, and put away in God's treasury—and the sins of middle life, and perhaps the sins of old age, too, to be brought out, by-and-by, and laid to our charge! Who shall be able to stand in that great day? Only those who are washed in the blood and robed in the righteousness of Christ Jesus our Lord!

35-38. *To Me belongs vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. For the LORD shall judge His people and repent Himself for His servants, when He sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left. And He shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? Let them rise up and help you, and be your protection. To you who trust in anything except God, the day will come when you will hear such terrible words as these—*”Now let your riches save you, let your pleasures and your vices cheer you. Go you now in your own wicked ways and see if you can find any comfort in them!” What holy sarcasm there is in these words, which will cut to the quick the conscience when it is once fairly awakened!

39-43. *See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me: I kill, and make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand. For I lift up My hand to Heaven, and say, I live forever. If I whet My glittering sword, and My hand takes hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to My enemies, and will reward them that hate Me. I will make My arrows drunk with blood, and My sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy. Rejoice, O you nations, with His people: for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His adversaries and will be merciful unto His land, and to His people. It is only in mercy, you see, that the Lord deals with His people. They cannot stand before Him on the ground of justice, but in His mercy is their place of refuge! May we all find that mercy by fleeing for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us in Christ Jesus and His glorious Gospel! Amen.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—406, 544, 538.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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THE ROYAL PREROGATIVE NO. 1465B

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

*“See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me: I kill,
and I make alive; I wound, and I heal.”
Deuteronomy 32:39.*

THERE is but one God—Jehovah is His name—the “I AM.” That one God will not endure a rival. Why should He? He made all things and sustains all things. Should a creature that His own hands have made be set up in rivalry with Him? If it is a great man like Nebuchadnezzar, if he says, “Behold this great Babylon which I have built,” God will send him to eat grass among the bulls and make him to know that no man is great in the sight of God! What a provocation it must be to God to see men bowing down before idols fashioned by their own hands! What a degradation to man that he should worship gold, or silver, or wood, or stone—and what a grievous dishonor to the great God of all! And it seems to me to be the worst of all dishonors when God sees the image of His own dear Son made into an idol and men prostrate themselves to worship the representation of the Cross on which redemption was lifted on high!

This must touch His sacred soul and vex Him to the uttermost, for God is God, alone, and beside Him there is no other. He will not give His Glory to another, neither His praise to graven images. In the text before us the great *Ego* is seen. The Lord says, “I, even I.” That *Ego* is so great that it fills all places and, therefore, there can be no room for another. “I, even I, am God, and there is no god with Me.” “Besides Me,” He says in another place, “there is none else.” Oh, to have such lofty thoughts of God that we can have no consideration for anything that would rob Him of the Glory which is so exclusively His own! Gladly would we burn with a holy jealousy which abhors the idea of a rival god and casts the name of Baal out of its mouth with utter loathing!

In the text the Lord claims the sovereign prerogative of life and death. He says, “I kill, and I make alive.” It is He from whom we first of all receive our being. His hand kindles the torch of life and from Him comes the quenching of the flame. No angel’s arm could save us from the grave, nor could a myriad of angels confine us there when once again He shall bid us rise. God kills and God makes alive. Royal personages have usually been very jealous of the prerogative of life and death, but our great God has it without bound or limit. He reigns supreme. “I kill,” He says, “and I make alive.” From the connection in which the text stands, it is clear that the Lord alludes to the making of nations, or to the destroying of nations.

It was God that made Israel to be a people. It was God that cast out the Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites from being nations before Him. It was God that raised up Chaldea and Babylon and then strengthened Persia to break Babylon in pieces and Greece to destroy Persia—and Rome with iron feet to break down Greece—and when the time had come it was He who spoke to the city of the seven hills and she, too, lost her royal power. Kingdoms and thrones belong to the Lord and the shields of the mighty are lifted on high or laid in the dust as He wills. Though they regard it not, there is a King of kings and Lord of lords—and when the long page of history shall be unrolled and men shall be able to see the end from the beginning with enlightened eyes—they shall know that all through the ages the disregarded and neglected God, the unseen and even unthought of God, was still reigning evermore! Across the pages of earth’s long record shall be written in right royal hand, “I kill, and I make alive.” In Providence God is absolute, the blessed and only Potentate whose sovereign will knows no dispute.

At this time, however, I purpose to carry this great Truth of God away from the realm of Providence into the kingdom of Grace. We shall confine ourselves to that second sentence—“I wound, and I heal.” On this Word we shall make three observations, the first being that *none but the Lord can wound or heal*. Secondly, that *the Lord can wound and heal*. And, thirdly, that *the Lord does wound and heal*—three thoughts which are closely connected and yet are marked by instructive shades of difference.

I. First, NONE BUT THE LORD CAN WOUND OR HEAL. To begin at the beginning—*the Lord alone can spiritually wound*. When we have to deal with human hearts, our first effort has to be to wound them. Naturally, man thinks himself whole-hearted and in sound health, but he is not so. The great object of the Gospel ministry, at first, is to convince men of sin, to humble them before God—in fact, to *wound* them, to cut them to the heart. But *no man* can wound without the Lord. I speak without any measure to my utterance—no preacher can truly wound the human heart. He may speak very honestly and plainly. He may speak with deep pathos and true affection. He may wield, at times, the thunders of God and at other times the soft and gentle bands of love may be in his hands, but in no way can the preacher get at the heart of men unless his Master is with him.

Charm you ever so wisely, O wise man, the adder is deaf and it is in vain that you use your enchantments. As well convince the wild winds, or convert the wayward waves, as hope to touch the human heart till God makes bare *His* arm! It is the Holy Spirit's work to convince of sin and until He puts forth His power, the preacher may preach himself dumb with weariness and blind with weeping, but no result can possibly follow. And what is true of preachers is true of all the teachers in the Sunday school, of all the earnest folk that go about to speak personally to men, yes, and of the most tender mother and the most earnest father! There is no wounding the child's heart—there is no breaking it down into contrition by the most tender arguments or the wisest counsels! You will come back and say as we have done many times, "Who has believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

Yes, dear Friends, and the most solemn *Truths of God* which, in themselves have a natural tendency to wound the heart, nevertheless cannot do it apart from the work of God Himself. There is the Sword and, in itself, it is sharp and cutting, but no man can handle it! The eternal arm must be revealed, or the hide of behemoth will not feel the weapon! A sword will cut through a coat of mail if a Coeur-de-Lion has the wielding of it—but not in a child's hand will it wound to killing. God must take the Scripture in *His* hands and use it to the dividing of joints and marrow, or sinners will escape its power. Terrible Truths there are in the Bible which ought to make men shake, but they hear them and deny them—they even laugh at them and continue in sin!

Sweet truths there are which ought to make a rock shed tears, but you may tell of Gethsemane's bloody sweat and the five dear wounds of Him who was found guilty of excessive love and yet men will hear it and go their way, each man to his farm and to his merchandise and forget it all. I grant you the Truths of God are powerful, but not until the mighty God applies them to the heart and conscience! And in addition to the Truth of God, *Providence* itself may come and work upon the heart of men, but cause no wounding of the right sort. I have seen the ungodly brought to destitution and poverty by their extravagances and brought to sickness and death's door by their lusts—and yet they have not been wounded.

They have seen the result of sin; they have even felt it in the marrow of their bones and yet the dogs have gone back to their vomit. They have still clung to their idols and held to their abominations! The burnt child dreads the fire, but the burnt sinner thrusts his hand into the flames again. We have seen men so sick that they have trembled at the thought of death and it has been supposed from what they said, that they were really impressed—and if they were restored to health would lead another life—but, alas, we have seen them restored to health and sinning worse than before! The wicked breaks his bands asunder. They cast their cords from them. All the terrors of Providence—bereavements, losses, sicknesses—all have failed with the unregenerate. Their stone heart has turned the edge of the plow which sought to break it up. Men have wearied all the agencies of Grace and Providence, but yet they have not been wounded! Their heart is stout as that of leviathan, "yes, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone." None can effectually wound the heart but God, alone.

Now, the same thing is true about the healing—*none but the Lord can heal*. Of course there is no need with regard to those who were never wounded. Nobody can heal such persons. I have known some preachers try to do that, though it has always seemed to me to be poor work to try to heal men who have never been wounded; to preach mercy to persons who think that they have no sin; to preach Grace to men who dream that they have merits of their own. Christ did not do so! He said, "I came not to call the righteous, but *sinner*s to repentance. The whole have no need of a physician, but those that are sick." There is no healing, then, for those who are not wounded—and equally there is no healing those who *are* wounded unless God lays *His* hands to their sore.

Have you ever met with spiritually wounded persons? If you have, if you are a Believer, your whole heart has gone out towards them and, drawing examples from your own experience and promises from the Word of God and sweet encouragements from Gospel doctrine, you have labored to pour a healing balm into their bleeding wounds. But have you not often failed? No, apart from the Spirit of the living God, have you not *always* failed and must you not fail? Ah, dear Friends, it is one thing to talk of a wounded spirit, but it is quite another thing to *feel* a wounded spirit! And you may talk about healing, too, but it is quite another thing to receive the healing and quite another thing to apply it.

Let God cut a man with His great Sword as once He smote me, and I guarantee you that no ordinances will heal him! “No,” says a friend, “come and hear a sermon.” He hears it, but the preaching makes him worse and he feels more sad than ever. I have known persons foolish enough to persuade such seekers to come to the Communion Table! They have only eaten and drunk *condemnation* to themselves! While they have been at the Table they have known themselves to be intruders and their hearts have bled more than ever. You can easily pacify a man whose sense of sin is a mere pretense, just as you may soon heal the *imitation* wound—but it is not so with one who has the arrows of the Lord rankling within him—he needs Divine surgery!

As for the hypocritical penitent, give him outward sacraments and he believes that he is all right. But if God has wounded him, all the sacraments under Heaven will never minister consolation to him. He must go to God for that, for only in Christ Jesus can it be found. All the preachers, yes, and all the doctrines of the Bible, sound and true as the preachers may be, and inspired as the doctrines certainly are, will fail to comfort a bleeding soul until the eternal Lord shall bow Himself from His Throne in Heaven and bind up the broken in heart! I know it is so! Gospel Truth is sufficient, in itself, to *comfort* all that mourn, but it will comfort nobody so long as the natural unbelief of the heart remains.

Get a hold of a lacerated spirit, torn with unbelief and try what you can do. Say, “Trust in the Lord, my Friend,” and he replies, “I cannot trust.” Tell him Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and he says he knows that, but he cannot get hold of it. Go on to tell him how the Lord receives the very chief of sinners. Do your duty with him, for whether you can heal him or not, you are bound to set the Gospel before him—but you shall find that you have worked in vain if you have gone in your own strength and forgotten the prayerful spirit and the humble reliance which are so necessary to success. God can use you to heal a broken heart, but you cannot do it yourself!

Unconverted Hearer, look not to us as though we could do anything for you, but look only to Jesus! Ah, Friend, if I could wound you and if I could heal you, it would do you no good! If I could convert every sinner here, of what use would the human conversion be? Have you never heard of Mr. Rowland Hill being met, one evening, by a drunken man who staggered up to him and said, “Hallo, Mr. Hill, I am one of your converts!” “Ah,” said Mr. Rowland Hill, “very likely, but you are none of *God’s* converts, or else you would not be drunk.”

Now, our converts, if they are *our* converts, will be very poor productions. If one man can convert you, another man can unconvert you! That which is worked by the flesh can be undone by the flesh! “You must be born again. Except a man is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Unless there is a work of Grace in the soul which the will of man, the will of the flesh, blood, birth, education, teaching can never work—unless, I say, there is a *supernatural* power exercised upon us, we shall never see the face of God at the last with acceptance! So there is the first Truth of God—God alone can wound and God alone can heal.

II. And now, secondly, THE LORD CAN WOUND AND HE CAN HEAL. What a mercy this is and how comfortably it encourages the Christian to go about his work! *The Lord can wound*. He can pierce the most unlikely heart. Look at Saul of Tarsus. You would never have thought, when he was hurrying to Damascus to drag the saints to prison, that he would ever be humbled and made to cry out, “What will You have me do?” The Lord knew His man and just when he was on the brow of the hill and could see Damascus in the plain, and was ready to devour the saints, the Lord let fly an arrow! Down went one Saul of Tarsus, so wounded that it took three days to extract the arrow!

This was amazing, for Saul was like leviathan, of whom we read, “The sword of him that lays at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon”—yet the arrow of the Lord laid him low! The Lord can wound men in very unlikely places. I have known the arrow of conviction come home to a man who had not entered a place of worship for years. Such is the infinite Sovereignty of God that He calls them a people that were not a people, and even those who sought Him not He seeks out. Yes, even in the haunts of sin, a man is not safe from the arrows of God—I mean the arrows of God’s

infinite Love! God can still touch the conscience. Leviathan, you know, is wrapped about with scales, “shut up together as with a close seal,” yet there is a weak point even in leviathan!

The cunning hunter knows how to find it out and though there are some men so skeptical, so atheistic, so obstinate, so profane, so abominable that nobody dares to come near them, yet have we known it—attribute it to the praise of Sovereign Grace—the Lord has smitten even these with His great and strong Sword and afterwards He has healed them by His mighty Grace. Never despair of anybody! If salvation were *man’s* work you might despair, but since it is *God’s* work, despair of none! The wretch who is the nearest approach to an incarnate devil may yet become as an angel of God! Such is the Grace of God that though men make a league with Death and a covenant with Hell, He can break their leagues and disannul their covenants, take the prey from between the jaws of the dragon and get to Himself renown! The Lord can wound, then.

He can wound some that have been sitting under the Gospel for years and have defied its power. My arrows have rattled against your harness and I have said, “It is all in vain,” but I pray my Master, one of these days when I am drawing a bow at a venture, may be pleased to direct it between that joint of the harness which I feared did not exist—that little joint where the shoulder piece does not fit close to the breastplate. I have feared that you were encased as in the scales of leviathan, of which we read, “One is so near to another that no air can come between them: they are joined one to another.” Yet the Lord can send in His arrow and make the proud heart feel the power of His glorious Truth! The most thoughtless, the most careless, the most abandoned are still within range of the Lord’s bow!

What a very sweet side of the Truth is the second part of it—namely, that *He can heal*. There are some awful cases of bleeding wounds! I wonder whether I have in this audience any souls desperately wounded? I have known the heart bleed as though it would bleed to death beneath the sword of conviction. Some are driven to despair and have been ready to lay violent hands upon themselves in the bitterness of their souls. Let it ring out like a trumpet that these poor despairing ones may hear it—*the Lord can heal!* There is no case so desperate but what Jehovah-Jesus can recover it! Despair, you must let your captives go! Despondency, you must open your prison when Jesus comes! Has He not come forth from the Father on purpose that He may loose the captives and say to the shackled ones, “Go free”?

The wounds which God gives are apt to fester. You remember how the Psalmist said, “My wounds stink and are corrupt”? When there is bad blood, we have known men’s wounds to become horrible and some souls who have had their conscience awakened have become a terror to themselves. “I cannot be saved,” they say. “I cannot pray. How should such a wretch as I am ever pray? I cannot hope for mercy. It would be an astonishment to Heaven and Hell, too, if ever I found mercy.” Listen to me and let your heart believe it—you may certainly recover! God, who does all things and to whom nothing is impossible, can heal your wounds though they reek with corruption! If you lie at Hell’s gate; if you seem to be half in Tophet already, His arm is strong enough to help you!

If you will look to Christ lifted up on the Cross, there is pardon, life, acceptance, joy and Heaven for you, even for you! He that wounded you will heal you! He that has broken you will bind you up! He that has killed you will make you alive! Let your ears take in the gladsome message which I am bid to deliver you—“I wound, and I heal.” Yet let me charge you not to look for a cure anywhere but to God in Christ Jesus! Shun the thought of being healed except the Lord shall heal you! I dread lest a wounded soul should go to a minister or to a priest, or to the most religious person in the world and think to get healing from man! Your wounds are meant to drive you to your *God*. Seek Him and no one else!

To your knees, now, in your private chamber, or if you have not one, get alone even in the street, for you can be alone in a crowd—but go *to God* with your bleeding heart! Tell Him, “I am a sinner. Lord, I am all but a damned sinner! I have been such an offender that I scarcely dare to hope, but I hear that You can heal me and give me comfort. Oh, for Jesus’ sake be merciful to me! I thank you that you have wounded me—it were better for me to be wounded than to be as indifferent and careless as I used to be. But now, Lord, do not altogether break me to pieces and treat me as an enemy! My spirit fails unless You comfort me. Oh, look upon me!” If you cannot say as much as that, yet let your tears drop and look up, saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Do but cry to Him and you shall find healing, for God can heal you and none else.

Away with those who dream that outward religiousness can do you good! Away, away with the deceivers who would tell you that *they* can give you pardon! No man living can absolve his fellow sinners—the pretense is the superlative of blasphemy! God is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. And He

has committed to us the Word of reconciliation and we are glad to proclaim that Word and point you to the Lord Jesus who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins!

III. Now I come to my third and last point, and that is—THE LORD DOES WOUND AND DOES HEAL. I have two things, here, tonight. I will only show them to you and have done. First, *I have a bundle of arrows* which I have seen shot at different times from the bow of God so as to wound men. I cannot shoot them at you just now, but I will *show* them to you. I have known Him shoot this arrow at a man—the arrow of continual gentleness. He has been very good to the sinner and continued His kindness to him for years.

Augustine tells of one to whom God was so wonderfully kind and the man was so wonderfully bad, that at last he grew astonished at God's goodness! And since the Lord continued to load him with benefits, he turned round and cried, "Most benignant God, I am ashamed of being Your enemy any longer. I confess my sin and repent of it." How I wish that that arrow would pierce your hearts! It is one which readily penetrates a noble mind. The more gross and animal natures do not feel it, but where God has left some little spark of nobility, a man more readily feels, "I cannot go on and sin against a God so good." It is a very sharp arrow, but it is dipped in love and it wounds most sweetly.

Here is another—God is angry with the wicked every day. Oh, if that Truth of God would go home to some of you, "God is angry with me, for I have broken His holy Law." Surely it would cut you to the quick! I do not like anybody to be angry with me, but oh, to have the *Lord* angry with me! How could I endure it? Dear Hearer, I hope you will feel the smart of this warning. It is very easy for you to hear it and for me to speak it, but if you once *feel* it, it will tear your heart and fill your loins with agony!

Another arrow—"He that believes not is condemned already." You are not to be condemned at the last in the future—you are condemned NOW! You are not in a state of probation—you have already been proven and you have failed—and you are walking this earth at this moment as a condemned criminal! Ah, if that barbed iron were to enter your soul, it would wound you, indeed. Here is another arrow—"The wicked shall be turned into Hell, with all the nations that forget God." "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Many have been playing with that arrow lately—it is a very sharp tool and he had best beware who toys with it! Let the Lord send it home and it will kill a man's proud hopes and vain presumptions as quickly as any arrow in the quiver of the Almighty!

Here is another—"You have destroyed yourself." Your present state of ruin and danger is your own fault! You have brought it upon yourself and you have nobody to blame but yourself that you are a lost man. Ah, that will rankle and pain the soul as though a sword were in the bones! And here is another—"You are dead in sin. You have destroyed yourself, but you cannot save yourself." I have seen a man get that into his flesh a little way and he has been livid with anger. He has bit his lips and said, "I will never hear that preacher again. Why, he made out my case to be hopeless!" The man is sure to come again. He is like a great fish in a stream with a hook in his jaws. He will draw out a good deal of line and we will let him have it, but he must come to a stop before long with that solemn Truth of God to hold Him! He struggles hard but that sharp text is not soon dislodged from the heart—"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself."

Thus I might continue to show you a sample of the weapons with which God wounds men. He has His two-edged sword, His spear, His arrows, His battle axe and weapons of war. You say, "I do not feel them." No, and I cannot make you feel them. I have told you before that it is not *my* arm that can wield them! But when God is pleased to use any of these, the people fall under Him. "Well," says one, "I do not think that I shall be wounded." No, but I am glad you are in the battle, because when the arrows are flying they may strike you as well as anybody else! I have had to deal with wounded ones that I never reckoned upon seeing in such a condition.

Oh, what gashes have I seen in men that had been given to all sorts of fashionable sins and who had sneered at religion! They have come here, at first, from the most miserable motives, but they have had to come again and weep and cry before the Lord with broken hearts! You never know where bullets may find their mark! You who are the servants of Satan are on dangerous ground when you come near a faithful ministry. No, I will alter it—you are on *blessed* ground—where the slain of the Lord have been many and where the people of God are earnestly praying for you! I know at this moment they are putting up the prayer, "Lord, send the arrows home! Send the arrows home." Their prayers will prevail with God and He will bare His arm.

There is no mistake about this matter—He "will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion." When He puts His arm to

the work, who shall stand against Him? He will do all His pleasure. Glory be to His blessed name, He can wound and He *does* wound according to His eternal purpose!

Now I will hold up before you *the bottle of balm*. When a soul is wounded, the Lord applies His sacred surgery to the heart. He has healed some of us. The particular bottle of balm which He used in healing me is one which I know well and shall never forget. This was the label, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth, for I am God, and beside Me there is none else.” Why, do you know I was afraid of God until I heard that God was in Christ and that I was to look to God in Christ and that the very God whom I dreaded would save me? That Revelation came home with Divine power to my soul! The preacher said, “Look. This is all that is needed.” “There,” he said, “a fool can look! A little child can look! A half idiot can look! A dying man can look!” “Look,” he said, “and it is done.”

Did I really understand him—that I was only to look to Christ dying on the Cross for me and see God making an Atonement for my sins in the Person of His Son—that I was only to look and I should live at once? It was even so and I did look! My burden passed away and from that hour I can say what Cowper has so sweetly said in the hymn—

*“Ever since by faith I saw the stream
Your flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.”*

Oh, what a bottle of balm that is—redeeming love! How sweetly it drops into the soul! The Lord shows the wounded man that though he is full of sin, He can put that sin away without any violation of Justice when the soul believes in Jesus! Now let the balm drop a minute. “All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned everyone to his own way”—that fact gives us wounds. But now, “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all”—no balm of Gilead was ever so potent as that!

Poor guilty Sinner, if you will now trust Christ, your sin is yours no longer! It was laid 1,800 years ago upon the back of Christ, your great Surety! He was punished for it and He has cast it into the depths of the sea. You are forgiven, go in peace! Here is another drop of balm—When a man is wounded he feels that he cannot help himself—but then there comes in this precious Truth—the Spirit of God can do it! God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son and that Spirit helps our infirmities so that, though we know not what we should pray for as we ought, that Spirit is waiting to help us to pray!

O you wounded ones, may the great Spirit show you at this time the Person of the dear Son of God—God and Man! May He show you that Person wounded, covered with a bloody sweat and put to death! And may He sweetly whisper in your ear tonight, “He was *your* Substitute—He bore that you might never bear the wrath of God.” Then you will say as you go out of this house, “He can heal, for He has healed *me*. He has made me leave my despair and even my doubts behind me. Now will I sing unto my Beloved a song—

*‘Jesus has become at length
My salvation and my strength.’”*

So have I preached to you nothing but God in Christ Jesus and I am glad to have Him to preach to you. Suppose that there is a bad young man here at this time who has left his home and run away from his father? He has done wrong, very wrong, and, instead of going to a tender loving father and saying, “Father, forgive me,” he is afraid of punishment and, therefore, he has run away. There is an advertisement for him in the paper, inviting him to come home. Now, what has he to do to be right with his father? This poor, wandering, wayward, lost boy has got among the very scum of London and he is being ruined and starved to death. What must he do?

Boy, you must go home to your father! Go home to your father! He loves you; he is pining for you; he is grieved at heart about you! Oh, if he saw you tonight, it would break his heart to see you in your rags! He wants you to come home! Do you not see that it would be very foolish for that lad to say, “I shall get into an institution,” or, “I shall try to earn money.” Your father is rich, good, wise and kind—the best thing you can do is to go home to your father! Going home to your father, all will be right.

Now, take up the parable. All of us have left our Father and have journeyed into a far country. We shall never get right, again, except by going back to Him from whom we have gone astray. And Jesus—God in Christ Jesus—is waiting to welcome us! He is grieving over us right now! We have only to go to Him, for He says that He will never cast out one that comes to Him. “I do not know how He can receive *me*,” says one. Well, go anyway and try Him! “I cannot pray.”

You can pray, dear Friend. “But not *properly*.” Do not *try* to pray properly. Pray your heart out, as you can, and ask to be helped.

I know that some poor souls are in such a state that they would be glad if we would write them out a prayer. I was talking only a little while ago to one in distress and he said to me, “Oh, Mr. Spurgeon, you do not know how ignorant we are and when we are under a sense of sin, you do not know how foolish we are. If you would sometimes put the very words into our mouths it would do us good.” And I thought he was right, because I find the Lord saying in Scripture, “Take with you words and say”—and He tells them what to say. Come now, poor Soul, if you want to find God, let us pray a minute:

“O God, save us, for You alone can do it. Of Your great mercy heal our wounds, or else we must bleed to death. We cast ourselves upon Your promise in Christ Jesus Your Son—grant us now Your salvation, we beseech You, for His sake! Amen.”

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Deuteronomy 32:1-39.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—187, 233, 235.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR FRIENDS—I had intended to be home to preach on April 6, but as dear friends at home press me to make the rest longer, I have so far yielded as to wait here another week. And I now propose to be home on the 13th of April. My knees are still feeble, but in all other respects I feel fit to return. Moreover, I long to be preaching in my own pulpit among my own people and I must come home, though I somewhat dread the cold weather. Please pray for me, that I may have an active mind in a body which will allow of its full exercise and that the blessing of God may rest on my future labors far more than on those of past years. I find that funds are coming in very slowly for the College and the Colportage has a pressing need. Earnest fellow workers will only need to know this. Yours to serve in love for Jesus’ sake,

C. H. SPURGEON,
Mentone, March 20, 1879

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

A SERMON OF PERSONAL TESTIMONY NO. 2575

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JUNE 19, 1898.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 11, 1883.*

(One of the nights when the regular hearers left their seats to be occupied by strangers).

*"For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life."
Deuteronomy 32:47.*

THESE are among the last words of Moses before his death. He addressed the people in a most tender and affectionate manner before he went from them. "The old man eloquent" seemed as if he would never leave off—he kept on reminding the children of Israel of the goodness of God to them and telling them what they might expect at His hands if they would but serve Him. He pleaded with all earnestness again and again and, at last, used this master argument why he would have them keep the ways of God, "For," he said, "it is not a vain thing for you"—it is a most essential thing—"because it is your life."

It is very clear, from this passage, that there were some people in the days of Moses who thought that it was a vain thing to serve the Lord. Yet those were very amazing times, for, if men rebelled against God, they were smitten with terrible sicknesses and, sometimes, with sudden death. God was then so manifestly in the midst of the camp that great miracles were often worked and men were compelled to stand still and say, "This is the finger of God." Besides, whenever men in those days kept God's ways, they prospered. That was the dispensation of temporal rewards and immediate punishments, yet, though it was so—though the very bush in the desert glowed with the Glory of the Godhead, though the mountains smoked and trembled beneath the touch of Deity, though the uplifted rod of Moses had caused the Red Sea to be divided and had fetched water out of the flinty rock—yet even when Jehovah was so conspicuously with His people, there were some among them who said, "It is a vain thing to serve the Lord." This proves that miracles will not convince men if the Gospel of Jesus Christ does not! And it also proves that if God were to make His religion a thing of eyes and hands, to be looked upon and to be handled, it would still be rejected by ungodly men, for their hearts are set against it and they are determined not to have God or Christ to rule over them!

Seeing that men thought it a vain thing to serve God in those olden times, I do not wonder that men should think the same now, for, in these

days there are not such manifest judgments upon wicked men, neither are there always such apparent rewards for the godly as there were under the Mosaic dispensation. Nowadays the righteous man is often sorely tried and troubled. Sometimes he has more tribulation than his ungodly neighbors have and his trials come even as the result of his serving God! On the other hand, does not the wicked man often prosper? Have we not seen him “spreading himself like a green bay tree,” and covering the earth with his branches? This is the age of faith, in which God does not show Himself as He did in the olden time. It is the dispensation of spiritual things, wherein only spiritual men are cognizant of God’s Presence and working. And, therefore, it is no marvel that many turn upon their heels and say, “There is nothing in religion! It is a vain thing to serve the Lord.”

Now, dear Friends, I am not going to argue with you about this question, but I am going to bear my testimony concerning it. In a court of law, argument goes for much, but testimony is the thing which carries weight with the jury. They hear the evidence and if they believe that the witnesses are honest and truthful, they accept their testimony and give a verdict accordingly. If they have reason to think that the witnesses are only acting a part and speaking falsehood, they attach no importance to their evidence. I am going to give my testimony concerning the reality and blessedness of the religion of Jesus Christ, our Lord, in the hope that it will convince some of you of the truth of my text, “It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life.”

I begin by admitting that there is a great deal of so-called religion that is a vain thing and that is nobody’s life. The religion of ceremonies is a vain thing. If any man shall tell me that by any act of his, he can convey Divine Grace to me, I will not believe him! If he says that by the application of water, he creates within an infant, membership with Christ and makes that child to be an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven, I will not believe him! I shall attach no more importance to what he does, if he pretends to convey Grace by it, than I should to the *hocus-pocus of a gypsy*, or the *abracadabra of a magician*. God does not convey His Grace in that fashion, but by the working of His Spirit upon the mind, will and heart. True religion is not a thing that can be conveyed by water, or by bread and wine, apart from the state of mind and heart of the person receiving it. If my religion consists in putting on a certain dress and showing myself as a mere performer, or thinking that some good thing can come to the people by the sweetness of music, or the beauty of architecture, my religion is vain! It was not so with Christ and His Apostles—they went everywhere preaching the Word and proclaiming that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

Then again, a religion that consists in merely subscribing to a certain creed is a vain thing. Even if that creed were perfect, yet if your religion depended in simply believing it as a creed, it would not affect you to any real purpose. Religion is a life grounded upon belief, but salvation comes not to a man simply because he is orthodox. If his orthodoxy is merely a matter of the head—and all the while the heart remains unaffected, and the actions are unchanged—such a religion is a vain thing!

I have to also admit, with very great pain, that there is no doubt that a large portion of the religion of the present day—the religion that consists in a mere profession—is vain. If any man comes to this place and subscribes to the creed that I teach. If he is baptized with the Baptism of Scripture, itself, and if he is a most diligent man in all his devotions. Yet, if he does not truly trust in Christ—if his heart is not renewed by the Spirit of God, if his life is not a life of temperance, chastity, holiness and godliness—his religion is vain. It matters not that you are called Christians—the name to live is nothing—you must be spiritually alive! As our Lord told Nicodemus, “You must be born again.” A man must be godly through and through—and when he is so, his religion is not vain.

It is to that religion I now want to bear my testimony as faithfully as I can. “For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life.” I wish to give evidence in support of these four assertions. First, *it is no fiction*. Secondly, *it is no trifle*. Thirdly, *it is no folly*. Fourthly, *it is no speculation*. May the Holy Spirit help me to speak and you to hear!

I. First, then, concerning the religion that is our life, we declare that IT IS NO FICTION.

I speak on behalf of many who are present and of an almost innumerable company who are not present, and who could not be present, when I bear witness that having tried and tested the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have not found it to be a fiction! We were told that there was *God the Father* and we were bid to address Him in prayer as our Father. And we have found that, “like as a father pities his children,” so the Lord has pitied us, loved us and cared for us. We must always speak as we find and we testify that since the day we sought His face, all the love of the best earthly father has been eclipsed by the love of God which He has manifested towards us. God the Father a fiction? Why, in the lives of some of us, He is the greatest and most potent of all factors! We could do without anyone or anything else except our Father who is in Heaven! We have often spoken with Him in prayer and in His Word He has spoken back to us. In the time of trouble, it is our joy to run to Him and cry, “Father!” And in our hours of need, He has supplied all our needs “according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus.”

It is no use for any man to say that there is no such being as God, if he has never tried Him. There is no power in that kind of negative evidence! The Irish prisoner said to the judge, “There are three men who swear that they saw me kill the man, but I can bring 50 men to swear that they did not see me kill him.” The judge soon exposed that fallacy, for there was no argument in it. If you say, “I do not know God, for I have never sought Him,” we believe you, Friend, and we believe you with the deepest grief! And we wish that you thought us as honest as you are, yourself, when we reply that we have sought God’s face and we are conscious, not by the sight of the eyes, or by the hearing of the ears, but by a new inward sense which God has given us, that in Him we live, move and have our being—and it is our joy to know that it is so!

Again, in the blessed Godhead *there is a second Person namely, Jesus Christ*. Have we ever found Him to be real? It seems to be a current notion, even in the Christian Church, that Jesus Christ is dead. But some

of us believe in a living Christ and well we may, for we went to Him all burdened with a sense of sin and, at the sight of Him on the Cross, our burden disappeared! And many another time have we gone to Him whenever that sense of sin has returned—and He has comforted us exceedingly with the abundance of His mercy. No Christ Jesus? Why, we have in secret had such fellowship with Him as a man has with his dearest friend! We could doubt our own existence sooner than we could doubt the supernatural Presence of Christ with true Believers! It matters not if others say that it is not so with them—their sad experience does not prove how it is with us—and we bear our witness that of all friends, the most real is Jesus of Nazareth, of all helpers and comforters, the truest and best we have ever found is Jesus Christ our Lord!

There yet remains another adorable Person in the Sacred Trinity—the *Holy Spirit*. Is there such a Person? Does He work upon the hearts of men? I speak now, not for dozens or hundreds, but for thousands, and for tens and hundreds of thousands, when I say that He has new-made us! He has illuminated us! He has comforted us. He has strengthened us. He has guided us. He has sanctified us. He is with us and we are conscious of His Presence and His Power. There are times when we are carried clean out of ourselves. We speak, you say, like men in a frenzy, though we are no more frenzied than you are! There are many of us who are no more fools than you are and who could prove to you, in any matter of business or of science, that we are your equals in intellect. And we aver most certainly that there is a Power beyond ourselves which has caused us to sing in the depths of sorrow, which has enabled us to rejoice when we have been racked with pain, which has made us sublimely calm when we have seemed to stand between the open jaws of death—and has carried us out of ourselves so that we have freely forgiven those who did us wrong, loved them all the better for their wrong-doing and sought their good the more—inasmuch as they have sought our hurt. Such action as this proves the Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit! He is no fiction to us—and to know the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—is to some of us the most real thing that ever was upon the face of the earth!

I could wish that some, who speak of godliness being all an action, had known what I once knew when I felt *conviction of sin*. I think that I am usually as cheerful as most men, but there was a time when no poor wretch on earth was more sunken in despair than I was. I knew that though but young, I had broken God's righteous Law and had grievously sinned against Him. And, under a sense of my guilt, I went about burdened day after day. If I slept, I dreamt of an angry God and thought that He would cast me forever into Hell. When I attended to my daily calling, the dreadful thought of my sin haunted and followed me wherever I went. If anyone had said to me, then, "Sin is a fiction," I could not have laughed him to scorn, for I was in no laughing humor, but I could have sat down and wept to think that anyone should fancy that this grim reality was, after all, but a matter of foolish fear or cowardly dread!

Conviction of sin was real enough to me! And so was *the joy of pardon*, for, one day, I heard it said, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the

ends of the earth,” and it was explained to me that Christ, the Son of God, did take my sin and suffer for it, and that if I trusted Him, I might know that He had made a full atonement for me—and that I was clear of all guilt! I believed that message. It seemed to come to me straight from Heaven. I looked to Jesus and in a moment I leaped from the depths of despair to the heights of joyous confidence! I wanted to tell the assembled congregation that the witness of that humble preacher was true—that there was life in a look at the Crucified One—and life *at that moment* for all who looked to Him! If anyone had said to me, then, “That deliverance of yours is not real,” I would have answered, “Let those who knew me only a week or two ago bear witness to the change it has worked in me.” As the sorrow was real, so was the joy real, too! And the alteration worked in me was so great that I hope it helped to make others see its reality by my life and conduct in endeavoring to serve God.

And since then—I am still bearing my own personal testimony—what reality there has been *in all spiritual things* by way of consoling, comforting, strengthening, guiding and delivering! Religion not real? Well, some of us would willingly let everything else go as long as we may keep our faith. You may ridicule all we know, if you please, but you can never laugh us out of what we believe! If you had been in prison for six months, no one would ever convince you that imprisonment was not a real thing. And if, all of a sudden you had been set at liberty, no one would make you believe that there was no difference between liberty and captivity, and that neither of those conditions existed! And, in like manner, we believe and are sure that there is such a thing as conviction of sin and pardon for sin, for both these things are, to us, matters of fact!

Mark, yet further, that religion is, to us, no fiction, for, since our conversion, we have received certain privileges which formerly we did not possess. I will mention only one, that is, *the privilege of speaking with God in prayer*, with the assurance that He will answer us. Does God answer prayer? He who has never tried it is not able to tell, and it is most unphilosophical for any man to say that such a thing cannot be when he has never tested it himself! But they who have tried and proved it are the ones who know. I have sometimes wished that certain people could have seen some of the answers to prayer which I have received. I am sure they would have been surprised. Not long ago a woman came to see me about joining the Church. She was in great trouble, for her husband had gone away, under rather sad circumstances, to Australia, or somewhere in that part of the globe, and she could not hear any news of him. I said to her, “Well, let us pray for him.” When I had prayed for his conversion, I prayed that he might come back to his wife and I said to her, “Your husband will come back to you. I am persuaded that God has heard my prayer. So, when he returns, bring him to see me in this room.” As she went out, she said to the friend who had come with her, “How very positively Mr. Spurgeon speaks about the Lord answering his prayer! He says that my husband will certainly come back to me.”

In a little over 12 months that woman was in my vestry *with her husband*. I had forgotten the circumstances till she recalled them to me. About the time of our prayer, God had met with him on the sea, while he

was reading one of my sermons, as a penitent sinner. He was brought to the feet of Jesus and he came back and joined this Church. And he is with us at this day in answer to that prayer. "Oh!" says someone, "that is merely a coincidence." Well, that woman did not think so, nor did her husband and nor did I at the time—and I do not think so now! You may call it a coincidence if you like, but I call it an answer to prayer, and as long as I get such coincidences, I shall be perfectly satisfied to go on praying! "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." I do not believe I should have had such coincidences if I had not asked for them and, as I get them daily, I shall stand to it, nor shall anything stop me from this glorying—that there is a God that hears prayer! And I challenge all men to try for themselves whether it is not so. If they come humbly to God, by Christ Jesus, and seek His face, they shall not seek in vain and, by-and-by, if they continue to wait upon Him in prayer, He will gird them with power so that they shall ask and receive both for themselves and for others.

I would like to mention another thing that makes us feel that the religion of Christ is no fiction, and that is, *the many cases of conversion that are constantly witnessed among us*. If this were the time and place—and I do not think that it is, for I do not care about such an exhibition of trophies of God's Grace, or bringing men out, one by one, in such a fashion—I could tell, not only of the drunk made sober, but of the man, passionate and violent in temper, becoming as meek and gentle as a child. I could fetch one out from the congregation if you wanted to see him, and I could point you to the swearer, who at one time found it impossible to speak without an oath, but who, from the moment of his conversion, was never again tried by that temptation. I could bring the thief who now knows what is his own and what is his neighbor's—and who is honest as the day. And the unchaste, who were given up as if they could never be saved, who are now our Sisters in Christ and serving Him with modest, pure, simple hearts. Show us something else that makes such changes as these, if you can! Show us something else, if you can, that will meet the needs of the hardened and abandoned people in the back slums! We do not know where to find it—but we do know that wherever Christ is faithfully preached, such conversions are continually seen—and that morality and social order and everything that is pure and lovely are sustained and promoted by the Gospel of Jesus Christ wherever it is believed! These things are *matters of fact*—let those who care to do so, resist the natural inference.

One of the strongest things which are no fiction is, *the joy of Believers when they die*. We have lately lost some of our dearest and best friends from the Tabernacle. Some of our most earnest helpers have passed away, but, oh, they have died gloriously! It has been a pleasure and a privilege to see them rejoicing while everybody else was weeping—to hear them triumphant when all around them were sorrowful—to behold them casting gleams of sunlight from their eyes even when those eyes were being glazed in death! Give me a religion by which I can live, for that is the religion on which I can die! Give me that faith which will change me into the image of Christ, for then I need not be afraid to bear the image of

death! God grant that you and I, dear Friends, may know, as a matter of personal experience, that there is a solid truth in our religion, that it is, indeed, our life!

I know that there are some people who profess to disbelieve in religion altogether, yet, every now and then, they show that they do not doubt as much as they say they do. There was a traveler, in the backwoods of America, who put up one night at a log cabin. The man who lived in the house was a very rough-looking customer and the traveler felt rather afraid of him. The traveler had some money on him and he was half-inclined to go walking on instead of stopping there. The master bade him come in and eat with him. He did so and after he had eaten, the man said, "Stranger, it is my custom to always read a chapter in the Bible, and to pray before I turn in." The traveler said that, in a moment, he felt perfectly safe! He professed to be an infidel, but he showed that his infidelity was not very deep, for he believed in the man who worshipped his God—and was not afraid to sleep under his roof. William Hone, who wrote the *Every Day Book*, was an unbeliever once. But he was traveling through Wales and he saw a little Welsh girl at the door reading her Bible. He said to her, "Ah, my Lassie, you are getting your task, I see!" "What did you say, Sir?" she asked. "I said that you are learning your task." "What do you mean, Sir? I am reading my Bible. You don't call that a *task*, do you?" Well, he did think it was a task—it would have been one to him. She said, "Why, it is this reading my Bible that makes me happy all the day long! I am trying to learn some of it by heart, but that is no task to me, it is one of my greatest pleasures."

And William Hone afterwards confessed his own faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom he had been guided by the joy that he saw in that girl's face! He could not help believing that there must be something real in religion, after all—it was life to her, and very soon it became life to him!

II. I have taken so much time for the first part of my subject that I must be very brief with the rest. My second remark about true religion is that IT IS NO TRIFLE. "It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life."

Godliness is no trifle, dear Friends, *because it concerns the soul*. If a thing only concerns the body, I do not call it a trifle—cleanliness, temperance, obedience to the laws of health—these are very proper things to be urged upon men. I wish that people in general were more careful of their bodies, but the *soul is immortal*—it will live when the body shall have molded into dust and ashes! Therefore, trifle not with your souls. If you must play the fool, let it be with your moneybags. If you must speculate, let it be with your gold. But, I pray you, venture not upon any risk with your immortal spirit—make sure work for eternity, "for what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

True religion also *concerns God* and, therefore, it is not a trifling matter. If you must trifle with someone, trifle with your equal, even with your monarch, if you will—but never trifle with your God! He that made the heavens and the earth and that holds all things in the hollow of His hand is to be worshipped and revered, but never to be trifled with! Beware,

you that thus insult God, for trifling with Him will bring nothing but woe to you.

True religion also *concerns Heaven and Hell*—and these are not to be trifled with. True godliness is such a thing as no saint ever dares to trifle with. He strives to enter in at the strait gate. He throws his whole energy into the running of the Christian race. No true minister ever trifles with the Truth of God he proclaims. I have preached the Gospel, now, these 30 years and more, and some of you will scarcely believe it, but in my vestry behind that door, before I come to address the congregation in this Tabernacle, I tremble like an aspen leaf. And often, in coming down to this pulpit, have I felt my knees knock together—not that I am afraid of any one of my hearers—but I am thinking of that account which I must render to God, whether I speak His Word faithfully or not. On this service may hang the eternal destinies of many. O God, grant that we may all realize that this is a matter of the most solemn concern! May we all come to God by Christ Jesus, that everything may be right with us, now, and right for eternity! God grant that it may be!

These are things which must not be trifled with, because their weight is incalculable if we do trifle with them. There will be such damage as can never be remedied. A man who once becomes a bankrupt, may start in business, again, and yet grow rich. The commander who loses a battle may gather together his troops, again, and yet lead them on to victory. But if the battle of this life is lost, woe the day! It is lost forever—there is no hope of any change to all eternity! It is not, therefore, a matter to be trifled with, but a thing to be attended to with all our might. I love to see Christians in downright earnest. The other day we lost a merchant from the City of London—a man of wealth and standing and, at the same time, a deacon of a Baptist church. Just a night or two before he died, he was at a Church meeting. He was unwell, and they could have done without him but, as he was a deacon, he felt that he ought to be there. When his pastor said to him, “My dear Sir, I think you should not be out,” he answered, “If I had not been out, today, in Gresham Street, about my own business, I would not have been out, tonight, about my Master’s business. If I am well enough to look after my own affairs, I am surely well enough to attend to His.”

Let there always be with you, dear Christian people, this thought, that the Master’s business must never be pushed behind your own, but that it must always be first and foremost with you. “It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life.” The highest point, the crown, the flower, the glory of your life is your religion.

III. Now notice the next point. “It is not a vain thing.” That is to say, IT IS NO FOLLY.

First, *it is no folly to serve God*. Suppose, my Brothers and Sisters, it should turn out, after all, that there is no God? Suppose that we should all die like dogs? Then there would be nobody left to laugh at me for having served my God. That is quite clear. I am of the same mind as Cicero, when he spoke about the soul being immortal, and someone said to him, “Philosophers will laugh at you for saying that.” He replied, “They may laugh while I live. I am used to that kind of treatment. And if I am dead

and they also are dead, it is quite clear that no dead philosopher will be able to laugh at me.” We who believe in Christ have two strings to our bow. If we live again in another world, all will be well with us. If we do not, we shall be as well off as you will be. We are as happy as you are, anyway! Actually, we feel that we are far happier—so we are quite content to go on as we are. If it is folly to serve God, I am willing to be guilty of such folly as that! As I am His creature, I would serve my Creator. And as I am His child, I would serve my Father. I think it is the chief end of my being to glorify Him here and then to enjoy Him forever in Glory!

Further, *is it folly to be reconciled to God?* Is it folly to believe that there is eternal justice and that if there is eternal justice, there will be a judgment? And if there is a judgment, there will be punishment for sin? Is that folly? And is it folly to believe that Jesus Christ came and bore the punishment for those who trust Him? And that if He bore that punishment, then those for whom He bore it may go free? And that if He bore it for those that believe in Him, then I, believing in Him, am clearly saved? Is that folly? It seems to me to be the most rational form of reasoning that I have ever come across yet, and to it will I stand! “God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Next, *is it folly to be prepared to do your duty?* I venture to say that a man who is a true Christian is the most ready of any men that live to do his duty. I do not know whether it is ever a Christian’s duty to kill people, but if a man is a soldier, it is amazing how often religion makes him a good soldier. Read a bit of veritable history. An officer wanted to call out some troops in India for a certain duty, and he said, “At this time of night it is no use, for all the men are drunk, unless you send for Havelock’s saints—they will be all right.” And so they were. Some time after, it was rumored that one of the “saints” was drunk, and Havelock straightway made enquiry and found that it was not one of his men, but another who bore the same name. The general said, “I do not know what Baptists are, but if Havelock’s men are Baptists, I wish the whole army were Baptists, for there are no other soldiers like them.” There was a commander who found his army better fitted for conflict because they feared the Lord and lifted up their hearts in prayer to Him. They never turned aside to drunkenness and other evil ways. God grant that you, dear Friends, may have a religion that will make you ready to do your duty, whatever it may be!

Besides, *is it not true wisdom to be prepared for your eternal destiny?* It is wise, some say, to look to present things. So it is, to a certain extent, but it is wise to look at present things in the light of the future. A man was dying—dying without hope and without much concern, either. His lawyer was called in to make his will. He was willing away all his property. His wife and his little girl stood by his bed and heard him giving his instructions. He said, “As to the home, you know, Dear, I leave that to you.” So the lawyer put it down. His little girl said, “Then, Pa, you haven’t got a home of your own where you are going.” That sentence touched him—he had forgotten that matter—but, by God’s Grace, he was led to seek and to find the eternal Home. It must be a wise thing not to only

have a home of your own, here, but to have another and a better Home to go to when you die!

A person said, one day, "I know an infidel who lately died in perfect happiness and peace." "But," asked a workman who stood by, "was he in his senses?" "Yes," replied the speaker, "and he died in perfect peace." "Then," said the workman, "he must have had a very miserable time while he was alive." The other asked, "What do you mean?" He answered, "I will tell you what I mean. I have a very good, kind wife—the best woman that ever lived. And I have some dear children, too, and they are my comfort and joy. And if I had to leave them, and go away, I did not know where, and did not know whether I should live, again, or not, I should feel it the most awful thing in all the world to die! And I am sure that my wife would break her heart over it. But," he said, "now I can die in perfect peace because I feel that I am going Home to my Father and to my Savior—and my wife can part with me in peace because she knows that I am going where I shall receive even greater love than she can give me. But I think that infidel must have had a scolding wife and that was why he was glad to die. I cannot understand it on any other ground."

Nor can I. It looks to me to be a most unreasonable kind of composure for a man to lie down to die and say, "I do not know where I am going. I expect I shall be annihilated." I shudder at the thought! I could not die like that! But when I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him, then I can, with reason, as well as with faith, surrender myself into my Heavenly Father's hands.

IV. Now, lastly, let me say to you, concerning true religion, that IT IS NO SPECULATION.

There are a great many speculations nowadays. If any of you want to lose your money, or are particularly anxious never to see it again, or want to have a very limited view of it, I advise you to put it into a company. It will soon disappear—depend upon that! There are many speculations and there are many people who become speculators. But there *are* some things that are certainties, and here is one. *If any man will trust himself with Jesus Christ, he shall be saved.* He may, for some time, be in darkness, but if he will fully trust himself with Christ, unless God can lie, and unless Christ can be defeated, such a man must and shall be saved! And he shall know it, too. There is not in Hell a single man who can say that he trusted Chris, and yet that Christ did not save him. And I hardly think that there is anywhere on earth a man so base as to say that. At any rate, if he did say it, I should take leave not to believe what he said.

The process of salvation is very different in different cases. About a fortnight ago, there stood in Cheapside a young man reading one of my sermons which had attracted his attention. As he was reading it, he came across this passage—"If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are saved now. But I want you to project your faith further and to believe in Jesus Christ for the whole of your life, for if you do so, you shall not only be saved, now, but you shall infallibly be saved forever." Then followed the text, "I give unto them eternal life," and this comment upon

it—“Now, eternal life cannot come to an end. ‘He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.’ Everlasting life cannot come to an end. It is a thing that lasts forever. Believe for everlasting life and you have it, you are saved forever.”

The young man said, “Standing there, I did believe just as I was told. I trusted Christ and I believed, then, that in Him I had everlasting life. The next minute, I felt, ‘Oh, what a glorious thing this is! How I love Christ who has done this great thing for me! What is there that I can do to serve Him? What sin is there that I would not give up?’ Then,” he said, “I said to myself, as I walked on, ‘Why, I am saved! I am sure I am, because now I love Christ! Now I want to give up sin and now I want to serve Him.’” And was not that a sure proof of his being saved, because he saw the greatness of Divine Love to him and this made him grateful—and that gratitude turned him right round and made a new man of him? This is how Christ can save you, also! Suppose you have been addicted to drunkenness and that you are convinced of the evil of it. You go to Christ and He forgives you. Then you say, “Now I am forgiven, oh, how I love my Savior! I will never go back to my cups again! I have done with my old companions! I will go and seek out other people that love Christ and I will join with them if they will have me. And I will see what Christ expects me to do, and I will do it, for I will do everything for Him who has done so much for me.”

That is salvation—a change of character—a deliverance from that which held you in bondage, an entrance into the blessed liberty of loving God and wanting to be holy. Oh, that we might, each one of us, know that blessedness! It is no speculation—you do not believe in Christ on a chance. If you believe in Christ, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his Word shall never pass away—you are saved, as surely as God is God! He that believes in Christ shall be saved, now, and in the hour of death, and at the day of judgment, and forever and ever.

Now, dear Friends, in closing, I should like to say that *this salvation is suitable for all whom I am addressing*. Many of you know this and you have been praying that others may know it, too. This salvation is suitable for poor men. If you are very poor, is it not time that you were rich unto God? And if you have the hard side of the hill in this world, why should you not have eternal life, and joy and bliss in the world to come? It is also equally suitable for the rich man, for if you have not where to go when you die, I pity you. To leave your parks and gardens and mansions and estates, to go from Dives’ table to Dives’ Hell will be a horrible thing for you, my lord, and for your ladyship, if that should happen to be your case! You need a Savior, most certainly, rich as well as poor!

This salvation exactly suits you, my aged Friend over yonder. “Oh!” you say, “I am too fixed in my habits. I am afraid I shall never be saved. I am getting quite gray and very old.” Well, then, this is the very thing to make you young! “You must be born again.” “Can a man be born again when he is old?” That is what Nicodemus asked and Christ told him that he could be. He can put new life into you, so that you shall be a child even if you are a 100 years old! And you shall joy and rejoice in God that, in your latter days, you have come to Him as a child and received a Fa-

ther's love. "Ah! but it won't suit *me*," says a young man. "I need to see a little life." That is exactly what I want you to see—but you will never see life till you see Christ! "Oh, but I want to be happy!" I know you do, and so do I! And I should like you to be happy. "I never believe in cats being cats before they are kittens. I like to see young people full of joy and full of merriment." I agree with you, but I tell you that there is more joy experienced by a Christian in five minutes than by a worldling in 500 years. When a saint lives near to God—

***"His joys divinely grow,
Unspeakable like those above,
And Heaven begins below."***

Talk of life and happiness—we have it who sought the Savior in our youth—and have never turned aside from Him since!

This salvation suits everybody. It suits you even if you are a most moral person. You are like a statue of marble, now, very beautiful and fair to look upon, but you have no warm life of love to God within you! Oh, if we could only make that marble live!—

"Oh, that those lips had language!"

But the Grace of God can put life into your dead morality!

Perhaps I am speaking to some who are immoral. If that is your case, this salvation is just the thing for you! The religion of Jesus suits publicans and harlots—it is just the thing for the felon and the depraved. Someone here, perhaps, is half-ashamed to be in this congregation. You are the very one I am sent after tonight—the lost sheep! It is you the Shepherd is seeking! He can afford to leave the 99 that went not astray. But you lost sheep—you lost woman, lost man—you are the very one that Jesus loves, for, "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Come and cast yourself into His arms by simple trust, for that is faith! Trust Jesus! Just as I lean my whole weight upon this rail, lean on Him your whole weight! Fall flat down on His promise of pardon! Lie right down on the Rock—trust in nothing of your own—but trust Christ for everything—and you are saved!

God grant that this may be the happy lot of us all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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

THE SECRET SPOT

NO. 780

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 10, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"Their spot is not the spot of His children."
Deuteronomy 32:5.***

THERE are frequently great difficulties in identifying the persons of men even when they have been distinctly seen. Our police courts have given us, during the last few weeks, most serious evidence that men may be utterly deceived as to the identity of individuals. They may be prepared, and honestly, I believe, to take an oath that such-and-such a person is the man whom they saw discharging firearms or throwing stones, and yet that person may have been many miles away. A slight change of dress, another color in the necktie or a different shape of the hat—or some trifling alteration of the hair may throw a witness entirely off his guard.

It was said to be almost dangerous for persons of a certain height, and of a certain color of hair, to be passing the police courts lest they should be arrested, and marched in with others to be identified by witnesses who were extremely anxious to identify somebody or other. This fact seems very clearly established—that the judgment of men, even with regard to the identity of their fellow creatures—is very far from being infallible.

Turning to the *moral* universe, identity there is far more difficult to be made out, for both the moral and religious world swarm with pretenders. You cannot know for certain who among your acquaintances is a Christian and who is not. This is known to God and may be revealed to each man for himself. But deception is so easy and is nowadays practiced in so masterly a manner that I know it is difficult to know a son of God from a son of Belial. You may sit down and commune with an Apostle and find he is a Judas! You may walk side by side with one who seemed to be a Simon Peter and prove him to be a Simon Magus. Yes, what is worse, you may be deceived about *yourself*, and whereas you may have thought your body to be a temple of the Holy Spirit, you may suddenly discover it to have been made a den of thieves.

Yet this is a very important matter, for if men are not right and cannot clear their consciences that they *are* right, they live in a state of perpetual unrest—never at any moment possessing safety. We ought to know—we should never be at peace till we *do* know—whether we are the children of God or not. And since the outward aspect so often deceives, and visible signs are not to be relied upon, it becomes imperative upon us that we should search deep, and look for signs that will not deceive us—prying into the very core and marrow of our being—till we have resolved the weighty question, whether we are the children of God or the heirs of wrath.

You see the text talks about certain secret *spots*. These are tokens in which men cannot so readily deceive as to their identity. The mother will be able to tell whether this is her child or not by the spot which is known to none but herself. The pretender may be very like her child—the voice may be the voice of Jacob, and the hands may not be dissimilar and he may be able to relate many things concerning his youth which it would seem that none but the real child could know—but the *mother* remembers that there was a secret spot. And if that is not there she turns the pretender aside. But if she discovers that private token, she knows the claimant to be her child.

I want, this morning, for us to remember that there are secret marks upon every Christian, and if we have not the spot of God's child, too, it will little avail us how fairly in our outward garb and manner we may conform ourselves to the members of the heavenly family. We have before us a whole host of persons who profess to be the children of the Most High. They are exceedingly confident because they come before us in the garments of God's people. But their robes do not deceive *us*. Immediately we tell them that we cannot judge by the *outward* appearance, for a religious profession is very easily procured. The very brightest colors may be flaunted and a man's garments may be outwardly spotless and fair to the eye, and yet for all that he may be the basest of pretenders.

None wash their hands more often than the Pharisees, and yet they are sepulchers full of rottenness. None say longer prayers than the Scribes, and yet none more ready to devour widows' houses. The outward garb of religion is no criterion by which to judge a man in an age so full of deception as the present—which has been fitly called the era of shams. If a devout exterior will not satisfy us, these professors address us in the language of piety. They use the holy speech which is thought decorous among the people of God. But we straightway tell them that albeit if we lived with them, we have no doubt their speech would betray them when the old brogue of Babylon would come out unawares, yet still their outward public speech can be no rule of judgment to us, for those often talk loudest who know least.

The bell rings men to Church but says no prayers itself. There may be the sign of the angel hanging over the inn door but the devil may be the landlord within. That sepulcher which is most whitewashed may be most full of dead men's bones. Should both garb and language fail to convince us, those who would make a fair show in the flesh point us to their actions, and, "In this" they say, "surely we cannot deceive, for 'by their fruits you shall know them.'" We confess that it is even so—we can only judge men by their fruits and we are not allowed by God's Word to judge any further.

But men must judge themselves other than by merely outward acts—they must examine their *motives* and the design and scope by which those acts were dictated and directed. Otherwise they may only possess that superficial morality which is deceptive because it springs not from the depths of the *heart*, but is a mere stagnant pool and not the clear crystal living water welling up from the inmost soul of the man. Men may be externally washed, but not internally quickened. They may be covered with

the flowers of righteousness, but those flowers may have no root, and by-and-by may wither away because the heart is not right in the sight of God.

Sirs, we will not be content, this morning, with examining your clothes, nor listening to your speech, nor even with touching your hands—for all these signs may deceive you, if they do not deceive us. We ask you to come with us into the stripping room and let us search for the spots, the secret spots, without which you cannot know to a certainty that you are the true children of the living God. This morning, as we may be helped by God the Holy Spirit, in solemn downright earnest we mean if we can, first of all, to take you to the examination of the secret spots. Secondly, to make a declaration from God's Word of what the true spot is. Thirdly, to discriminate among men as to those public and defiling spots which, alas, are to be found in all of us. And, then, fourthly, an exhortation upon the whole subject.

I. First, then, at the mention of private spots which are to be the insignia of the regenerate, there are thousands who say, "We do not shirk that examination. Truly the signs of saints are in us! Are others Israelites? So are we. We bear in our bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus—we challenge an investigation."

Be it so, then! LET US COMMENCE A MINUTE EXAMINATION. I am not now to deal with anything that is *public*. We are not speaking, now, about actions or words, but concerning those *secret* things which men have judged to be infallible marks of their being saved. Here is a friend before us, and as he lays bare his heart he indicates to us the spot which he thinks proclaims him to be a child of God. I will describe it. This man has embraced sound doctrine. He has managed by some means to become thoroughly Calvinistic.

He holds the doctrine of Election in all its length and breadth. He would fight to the last moment of life for any one of the five points of the Calvinistic confession. You cannot find a man more determinedly orthodox. He abhors all teaching which he judges to be uncertain in its soundness. And within his heart he believes that he is therefore saved. "Surely," whispers his vain heart, "surely a man with such a sound creed cannot be cast into Hell!" He delights to hear the preacher deal a heavy blow at Arminians, or Ritualists, or any other people who differ from him because he feels, then, that the privilege which he has monopolized in his own conceit is thus defended and preserved from all intruders. "Ah," he says, "I am saved. I have received the Truth of God and hold it with all my might."

Everywhere he goes his whole talk is of his favorite Shibboleth, "The Truth of God! The Truth! The Truth!" Not that the aforesaid Truth has ever renewed his *nature*! Not that it has ever changed his *moral* character! Not that it has at all made him a better husband or a kinder father! Not that it influences him in trade! Not that you could perceive any sanctifying effect proceeding from his creed if you lived with him! But still, this is it—*orthodoxy*, thorough orthodoxy, holding the Truth of God and holding it firmly, too, and denouncing all others—this is his balm of Gilead to heal all disease! This is his crown of rejoicing in life and his passport to the skies!

Now, Sir, we do not hesitate to say concerning you that, although you will not be pleased with us for it, that your spot is *not* the spot of the children of God! It is a good thing to be sound in the faith, but that virtue may belong to the vilest sinner out of Hell. There have been some men who have been orthodox to the core and yet they have been detestable hypocrites, and not one atom better, as their outward life has shown. No form of doctrine, however Scriptural, can ever save the soul if it is only received by the *head* and does not work in its mighty energy upon the *heart*. “You must be born again,” are the Savior’s words. And unless you are born again your carnal nature may hold the Truth of God in the *letter* without discerning its *spirit*. And while the Truth shall be dishonored by being so held, you yourself shall not be benefited thereby.

But here is another waiting to be searched. He also believes that he has discovered in himself the spot of God’s child. It is this—not so common a spot, I believe, in this congregation as in some—a *knowledge* of inward corruption. “Ah,” says one, “I know that I am an heir of Heaven because I am aware of the sinfulness of my nature. I know my heart to be horridly depraved. I believe my nature to be detestable and vile, and sometimes I am the subject of frightful blasphemous thoughts and have inclinations towards the most horrible iniquities. Surely I am a quickened child of God or I should not have so vivid a conviction of indwelling sin! I should not feel that I was so bad as I am if I had not been first of all quickened and awakened!”

Now, believe me, there are thousands who are under the delusion that this spot is the spot of God’s children! But let me assure them very affectionately that it is no such thing. God’s children *do* have a sense of sin. They groan because of the body of this death. They daily lament the plague of their own heart—but a full persuasion of their own sinfulness may be found in *thousands* who are not God’s children! It is a preposterous assumption that for a man to know himself to be a sinner proves him to be a saint! Let me ask the physician whether a sense of sickness proves a man to be cured. Let me ask a drowning man whether a sense of sinking proves that he is rescued! Let me ask a bankrupt debtor whether a sense of being penniless proves that he is rich.

You know better! Common sense teaches you better! It is not a discovery of your sin that will save you, but hearty *faith* in the *Savior*! And if you have not gone further than a mere conviction of sin—which may be nothing but a legal conviction and a natural alarm at the awful punishment of sin—if you have not gone further than mere alarm or remorse you have not the spot which marks you out to be a child of God. You may be a Judas crying, “I have sinned,” and you may even hang yourself through terror of conscience, and be none the less, but rather all the more, a son of perdition! A cutting Truth is this, but it must be told, lest any be misled.

I see before me at the door of the stripping room a third class of persons who say, “Surely *we* have this spot, for we are full of confidence that we are saved! We believe that we are saved—firmly *believe* it. We are not among those sinful people who indulge in doubts and fears. We *know* that we are saved. We have known it for years and we have never had a doubt about it. If ever a question is raised, ‘Do I love the Lord or not? Am I His or

am I not?’ we throw the question out—we believe it to come from Satan to mar our peace and spoil our comfort. Self-examination we have long ago given up as an unnecessary disturbing of the peace of our spirits. We have made up our minds that we are saved and it gives us great peace to believe that we are.”

Yes, but, my Hearers, such a spot is *not* the spot of God’s children, for after this fashion the foolish cry, “Peace, peace, where there is no peace.” Remember how easy it is to daub with untempered mortar—how readily you may build upon a sandy foundation and how the superstructure may be run up with marvelous speed if you build with wood, hay, and stubble—much more a fair show may you make with perishable materials than if you waited till you had gold and silver, and precious stones, slowly to build the edifice. But remember that for you to believe that you are saved does not *prove* that you are saved! The poor lunatic in Bedlam believes himself to be a *king*, but no man owns his sovereignty!

Your undisturbed conscience may be no evidence of Divine Grace, but rather a token of *reprobation*, for there are some who have received a strong delusion to believe a lie that they maybe damned. They are fooled by Satan into the delusion that they are the people of God, whereas they are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. Hope is our anchor, but what is the use of an anchor if it has nothing to lay hold upon? “I hope,” said one, when he heard of his neighbor’s death, “I hope he is all right.” And yet he knew that he died drunk!

Now, if that man had said, “I wish that there may have been found a way by which it is possible for him to be saved,” I could understand it. But to say “I hope,” where there was no ground and foundation for hope, was to speak as the foolish speak! You and I ought not to have a hope which will not bear the test. Oh, instead of shirking self-examination, practice it daily! Ask for the strong wind from the wilderness to come and smite the four corners of your house, for if it is built upon a rock it will not fall. But, oh, if it is but a sand-built house, it will be far better that it should come down *now* than that you should dwell in it for awhile with groundless comfort and find it fall about your ears to all eternity! No, the self-confident assumption that you are saved is not the spot of God’s children.

Frequently I meet with others who will say, “We certainly have the private mark of gracious souls, for we are so happy! We have such happy feelings when we are worshipping God. We feel so delighted with going up to the assemblies of God’s people. Sometimes at the Prayer Meeting we get so happy and excited we hardly know what to do! And when we sing those delightful revival tunes we feel so exceedingly blessed.” Now this may or may not be from the Spirit of God. God’s children are made glad in the House of Prayer, but remember, others are made glad beside God’s children—for doubtless there have been thousands who have received the Word with joy, as our Savior tells us—who are like the seed sown on stony ground which sprang up rapidly because it had no depth of earth, but afterwards when the sun had risen, it withered away.

Beware of being stony-ground hearers, and above all, let me say to you, beware of placing the slightest dependence upon your *attitude* and *feel-*

ings. The most desponding feelings do not prove that your soul is in peril, for some of those who before God were surest of Heaven have been the least assured of it in their own feelings. The highest and most rapturous feelings of delight do not prove us to be the children of God. Some have had no fear in their death, and their strength has been firm. They have not been in trouble as other men, neither have they been plagued like other men and yet for all that their end has been destruction! Moab was settled upon his lees and was not emptied from vessel to vessel, but how terrible was his end! Never, therefore, put any dependence upon your attitude and feelings—let them be what they may. Go deeper than the froth of *feeling*—search in the depths of principle for the priceless pearl of infallible evidence. This spot is *not* the spot of God's children.

There are others, and many, too, who will say, "But at least we can bring a mark which is not to be counterfeited, a sure and certain mark of conversion! There was a happy day when we experienced most extraordinary things." As soon as some people of an excitable temperament begin to narrate their treasured story of marvels you may anticipate that they are going to tell you that they heard a *voice*, or saw a *vision*, or were impressed with this, or saw that—all which may be true or may be imagination according to the truthfulness and commonsense of the speaker. And all this may have a connection with their being saved, for there is no doubt that many have been impressed in dreams and I will even venture to say by visions and voices.

Many men's first religious thoughts have been awakened in them by strange impressions, and, therefore, these things are not to be laughed at. Whether they are freaks of the imagination or not I care not, so long as men's minds are aroused the mode matters but little. But if anybody shall say that the *experience* of singular impressions or remarkable emotions *proves* men to be Believers I must most gravely and solemnly disagree! Alas, there have been thousands who profess to have seen angels who are now with devils! And I do not doubt there are tens of thousands who have fought with devils who are now with angels of light! It is not what you *see* with these eyes, nor *hear* with these ears, nor *feel* with flesh and blood—our religion is *spiritual*, and is spiritually discerned—not a thing of rhapsody, excitement, and imagination but a matter of sober thought and meditation. And if you have not something more than a mere day or night of singularities to look back upon, your evidences of Divine Grace are worthless.

I do delight to look back upon the day when I was converted to God. Many of you do and I hope you always will look back upon that happy hour with pleasure when you first turned to the Lord. But I have known what it is to feel that if I had no reason to believe that I was saved except the remembrance what I felt that day, I should have no solid ground at all. The fact is, Brothers and Sisters, the spot of God's children is not a thing of yesterday, but an *abiding* and *continual* token. The true spot is far more than any memory of the past, as I shall show you. And if you have not that, you may have all that you can imagine or invent, but God will repudiate you at the last, saying, "I know you not from where you are. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity."

II. We now come to the second head. WHAT IS THE TRUE SECRET SPOT WHICH INFALLIBLY IDENTIFIES THE CHILD OF GOD? Beloved, it were vain presumption and blasphemous arrogance for me to set myself up as able to tell you this of my own judgment. But God's Word reveals it to us and therefore we may tread *surely* where we have Revelation to be our guide.

Now, we are told in the Gospel according to John, concerning our Lord—"As many as received Him, to them gave He power [or privilege] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Here it is, then! If I have received Christ Jesus into my heart, then I am a child of God! That reception is described in the second clause as a *believing* on the name of Jesus Christ. If, then, I believe on Jesus Christ's name—that is, simply from my heart trust myself with the crucified, but now exalted, Redeemer, I am a member of the family of the Most High! Whatever else I may *not* have, if I have *this* I have the privilege to become a child of God. But if I have not this, I may have all the other spots I have been speaking of this morning—which may seem to some to be very great beauty spots—but they are *not* the spots of the children of God.

To strengthen the text we have already given you, let us remind you of another: "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." That is, whoever takes Jesus to be to him his anointed Priest, anointed to offer sacrifice of atonement for him, such a soul is born of God. He who takes this man or that to be his priest, or sets up to offer sacrifice for himself is no child of God, be he what he may. But he who takes the Most High Lord, once slain, but now ever living, to be an anointed Priest unto him may conclude at once that he has the spot of God's child upon him. Our Lord Jesus puts it in another way. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." Here is the matter in a nutshell!

Christ appears as a Shepherd to His own sheep, not to others. As soon as He appears, His own sheep perceive Him. They trust Him. They are prepared to follow Him. He knows them and they know Him—there is a mutual knowledge. He guides them, and they follow Him—there is a constant connection between them. If to put this Truth of God positively is not enough, let me remind you how our Savior puts it *negatively*. When the Jews were rioting around Him, instead of listening to His earnest voice, He turned to them and said, "You believe not, because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you." As much as to say, it is because I have not *chosen* you, and My Divine Grace has never looked upon you. It is because the Divine life has never throbbed in your bosoms that you do not believe on Me. If you had the life of God, and were God's children, you would accept Me at once. This is the one mark, the sure mark, the *only* infallible mark—a hearty faith in the appointed Redeemer!

My dear Friends, I doubt not many will say, "That is very simple." My reply is, "Glory be to God. It is simple!" The more simple the plan of salvation the more evidently it is of God. Are we not told that Babylon, the mother of harlots, has written upon her brow, "Mystery"?—*mystery* is the mark of the Roman Catholic faith—and the sure symbol of Antichrist. That Gospel which is so plain that he who runs may read it—that the wayfaring man, though a fool—need not err therein! This Gospel which is

preached unto the poor. This Gospel which may be understood even by a child—this is the Gospel, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God which is committed to our trust! What says the Apostle? “Seeing then,” he says, “that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.”

Here is the root of the matter and if you trust Jesus Christ with all your heart—if you rely upon Him to save you, and if your reliance is such that it touches your heart and makes you love the Man who shed great drops of blood for you. If your faith is such that it operates upon your moral character, constraining you no longer to be an enemy to your good and generous God—then you are saved, for you have the spot of God’s child! But “without *faith* it is impossible to please God.” I tell you solemnly that all your generosity, your almsgiving, your Sabbath keeping, your repentance, your prayers, your tears—all are *nothing* without faith in Christ! Go heap them up till they make a pyramid as great as that which casts its mighty shadow far down the Libyan desert—but they are as nothing, things of nothing!

All human excellencies, without *faith*, will fly as chaff before the wind when the hour of trial shall come. If trusted in, they are as smoke in the nostrils of the Most High because they rival the Cross of Christ. Go humbly to the Cross! Look up to Him who suffered there. Rely on Him and you shall live! But gad you about as you may to this shrine and to that, and scourge yourselves and deny yourselves this and that, and practice all the austerities you please—you shall be further, still, from God than at the first, if you despise the salvation of Jesus Christ.

Going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness which is of God by faith and therefore their spot is not the spot of God’s children. But coming simply to Jesus and resting alone in Him they have glorified God, and they are themselves proved to be the children of the Most High.

III. I shall now, in the third place, turn to another view of the subject which concerns THE DISCRIMINATION OF DEFILING SPOTS. The term “spot,” as used in the text, will not be read usually as we have read it this morning. It will, no doubt, to most readers suggest the idea of *sin*, and very properly so—then the text would run thus: the sin of the people mentioned here is not the sin of God’s people.

There is a difference between their guilt and the offenses of the Lord’s chosen. This brings me to the point—there is a discrimination to be made, even as to *sinful* spots. When God’s children are mired and bespattered with filth, still there is a difference between them and others. An unhappy thing it is—we cannot mourn too much over it—that evil remains even in the hearts of the regenerate, and that the much fine gold sometimes becomes dim and the glory departs. God’s people are a holy people, but they are not a *perfect* people.

They aspire after perfection, but they have not yet attained it. Sometimes, alas, they fall. We believe they never fall finally nor totally—but they often fall sorrowfully and foully. But yet the ungodly may not take comfort from the sins of God’s people for *their* spots are not the spots of God’s children. Let us very briefly—we cannot enter into the subject in full this morning—show that there is a difference between the sin of God’s

people and the sin of others. God forbid that you should imagine that I wish to excuse the sins of Believers!

In some views, when a Believer sins, his sin is *worse* than that of other men because he offends against greater light and knowledge. He revolts against greater love and mercy. He flies in the teeth of his profession. He does despite, in a measure, to the Cross of Christ, and he brings grievous dishonor upon the name of Jesus whom he professes to serve! Believers cannot sin cheaply. The very least speck on a Christian is more plainly seen than the foulest blot on the ungodly, just as a white dress shows the dirt the clearer. The more clean the paper, the sooner is the mark perceived—but if the paper is black, there may be many marks and stains and yet they may not be perceptible.

God forbid that we should palliate, excuse, or extenuate the faults of God's people! Sin is a horrible thing and it is above all things detestable when it lurks in a child of God! Yet the sins of God's people *do* differ from the sins of other men in many important respects. They do not sin with deliberation and with cool determination—meaning to sin—and sinning for its own sake. The ungodly man knows a thing to be wrong and therefore does it. He plans it upon his bed. He takes counsel with himself when he shall enjoy this pleasure or indulge that lust—knowing at the same time that the pleasure is evil, and the lust is iniquity.

The Believer possibly falls into the same sin as the unbeliever, yet not through evil aforethought, but through force of a strong and violent temptation. Had he paused awhile he would have despised the evil and turned from it with hatred. But there came upon him a sudden a rush of diabolical power, and he seemed borne away by it to his own intense grief—a grief which makes him go with broken bones for many a year afterwards. We do not sin willfully nor deliberately. We do not love the way of transgression—blessed be God, we could not run in it with all our heart—for if we saw the evil distinctly before us as such, our spirit, in calm consideration, would recoil from the mere shadow of it.

The child of God does not sin with the pleasure and gusto of other men. When the sheep stumbles, as it may do, into the mire, it is up again and on. But if the swine should fall there, it rolls over and wallows as in its element. A sinner in his sins is a bird in the air, but the Believer in sin is like the fish that leaps for awhile into the air but must be back again or die. Sin cannot be satisfactory to an immortal spirit regenerated by the Holy Spirit—it is poison to it and very soon that poison must be thrown out of the system—for the living child of God cannot endure sin to fester within him. If you sin, you “have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” But if you sin and *love* sin, then you are the *servant* of sin, and *not* the child of God.

Again, the child of God cannot look back upon sin with any kind of complacency. The ungodly man has this spot that after the sin he even boasts of it! He will tell others that he enjoyed himself greatly in his wicked sport and he will gloat over its sweetness, turning the morsel over and over, and rolling it under his tongue like an epicure delighting in a dainty dish. “Ah,” he says, “how sweet it is!” As for its being contrary to

God it makes it all the sweeter to him, or else, "God is not in all his thoughts."

But no man of God ever sins without smarting. Very soon conscience wakes, and, as the Word of God puts it, "David's heart smote him." It is a horrible knock that the heart gives when it begins to smite! All the men in the world may say what they please so long as my heart does not speak against me. But when conscience says, "It is true. You did it and you have played the fool exceedingly," then a man hangs his head and retires into the shades to hide himself awhile, for he is ashamed. If you can sin and not weep over it, you are an heir of Hell! If you can go into sin and afterwards feel satisfied to have done so, you are on the road to destruction! If there are no pricks of conscience, no inward torments, no bleeding wounds—if you have no throbs and heaves of a bosom that cannot rest—if your soul never feels filled with wormwood and gall when you know you have done evil—you are no child of God!

But if your sins plague you and your soul abhors them, and takes them with weeping to the Cross of Jesus, then the sins which you hate shall never destroy you. That which you loathe shall not be brought against you to condemn you. This shall be set down to the account of your Surety and not to you, seeing that He was delivered for your offenses and is raised again for your justification. The child of God also has this difference in his spots from others—when he knows the spot, and is led to repent of it—it makes him more careful in the future, especially in that respect in which he has erred.

Have you not seen him afraid to put one foot before another for fear he should do wrong? He had a fall the other day and he goes very tenderly, very softly. He is almost afraid to open his mouth now, because he spoke so unadvisedly the other day. His prayer is, "Lord, open my lips! I dare not open them." He used to be very fast and confident, but notice him now—he has a broken spirit and speaks with bated breath. He does not hold his head up loftily as he used to do. He thanks God that he is forgiven, feels that he has peace, and he blesses God for it—but he is jealous of himself with holy jealousy. You will not find him mingling with that company which led him astray. He is a burnt child and dreads the fire.

You will see him much more precise with himself than he used to be. He used to be precise with other men and lax with himself—now it is different—he can make excuses for others, but he makes none for himself. His heart now pants to be eminent for that very Grace in which he failed and he gives particular attention to keep watch and ward over that part of the wall through which the invader found entrance. But I need not enlarge. You who are the children of God must have noticed a difference between your sins now and your sins as they once were. And you cannot but observe, day by day, if you look within, that Divine Grace has made a change even in those sins in which our evil nature exercises most dominion.

But, Beloved, the best thing we can do is to keep as far away from evil as possible! We have no right to say, "I may be a child of God and yet do so-and-so." No! The heir of Heaven does not desire to *approach* the appearance of evil. I am much afraid for some of you who are asking, "Is *this*

wrong, and *that* wrong?” Do nothing about which you have need to ask a question! Be quite sure about it or leave it alone. Know you not that inspired Word, “Whatever is not of *faith* is sin”? That is, whatever you cannot do with the confidence that you are doing right is sin to you! Though the deed may be right to other people, if you have *any* doubt about it yourself it is evil to you. God grant, dear Friends, that we may not be “conformed to the world,” but be “transformed by the renewing of our minds.”

If I knew that there was a leper colony anywhere in the country, I do not think I should want to build my house near it. I should not send for the physician and say, “Sir, how far do you think the effect of pestilence might spread? I should like to get as near as I could without actually catching the disease.” “No, no!” You say, “if there is a plot of land to be bought where there is no disease in the neighborhood, *there* let my tent be pitched. It is best to dwell far off from evil.” O may God separate us from evil in this world, as we hope to be separated from it in the world to come! There will be a great gulf fixed between it and us in the next world—may there be a wide demarcation now.

IV. My close is AN EXHORTATION, an exhortation to myself and to you to make sure work for eternity, and to make it clear to your own consciences that you are, indeed, the children of God. Ah, my dear Hearers, it is not possible for me to be earnest enough in this matter! I wish I had a tongue like the pen of a ready writer, that I might speak to you with power this morning. Yet, perhaps, feebleness of words may give but the greater power in spirit if God the Holy Spirit will press upon the conscience of you all the need and duty of an earnest heart-searching self-examination.

A famous case is now pending in which a person claims to be the son of a deceased baronet. Whether he is or not I suppose will, before long, be decided by the highest authorities. Meanwhile the case is pending—a very weighty case for him—for upon the decision will hang his possession or non-possession of vast estates and enormous property. Now, in your case, you, many of you, profess to be the children of God—and *Heaven* hangs upon the question of the truthfulness of your profession.

Heaven? No, there is a dread alternative—Heaven or *Hell* must hang upon the truth or the falsehood of your profession! Yes, moreover about those two things there is flung a golden chain of *eternity*, making each of them more weighty than they otherwise would be. A child of God? Then your portion is *eternal life*! An heir of wrath, even as others? Then your heritage will be *eternal death*!

For a moment conceive that you are passing into the next world. What will be the trepidation of your spirit if it is then a matter of question? With what alarm will you await the decisive ordeal? “Shall I ascend on wings of joy up to the realms where angels dwell? Or must I sink with devils as the companions of my woe, to dwell forever in Hell?” What horror to have that question still unanswered! Is it uncertain now, my Hearer? Is it uncertain now, whether you are a child of God or not? Is it uncertain whether your spot is the spot of God’s children? Then let not an hour pass over your head till you have said, “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!”

Trifle not here, I plead with you! If you must trifle anywhere, let it be about some secondary matter—your health, if you will—or the title deeds of your estates. But your *souls*! Your never-dying souls and their eternal destinies? I beseech you be in earnest here, for you will be in earnest soon—earnestly praising God in Heaven—or earnestly moaning out your never-ending dolor in the pit where hope can never come! God grant us wisdom, then, since so much hangs upon it, not to play the fool by taking things at second hand but to search to the very roots and foundations of the matter to know whether we are saved or not.

This duty is much more easy to explain than to enforce, and more easy to enforce than to practice. We all shun it. The preacher naturally says to himself, “Have you not preached to others? You may surely excuse yourself.” The old member of the Church who has long maintained an honorable outward profession whispers to himself, or *Satan* whispers to him, “You are an old experienced Christian, why need you go back to the beginning and do your first works?” The young professor in the heyday of his zeal says within himself, “I *know* that it is right with *me*.” But ah, I pray you remember, he who takes things too quickly as being what he desires them to be will be deceived in the end. “The heart is deceitful above all things,” says the Prophet, “and desperately wicked,” and will you not believe it?

Examine it and cross-examine it, for it is a lying witness! Believe it to be dishonest and try to prove it so! And if haply you should be unable, then what a comfort to you! But to believe your heart to be honest and sound—why this is to begin where the *fool* does—at the wrong end of the chapter! Suspect yourself and go to Christ this morning as a sinner. Doubt yourself, and go to Jesus. Never doubt Him. Confess yourself now to be undone and ruined if it is so, but go to Him who is *still* the Savior able to save to the uttermost.

Still guilty, still lost, still defiled—go, still to the “fountain filled with blood!” Go, still, to the open-handed Savior, and ask Him to press you to His bosom and to save you now! This is the quick way, the sure way, the blessed way of finding out the secret spot—to go at once to Christ! If I never came before, O bleeding Savior, now I come, and if I have often come and put my trust in You, I come again—accept a guilty sinner who casts himself alone on You, and save him for Your mercy’s sake. Amen.

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“And for the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush.”
Deuteronomy 33:16.

MOSES died blessing the people. This showed his meekness, for they had been his plague all his life, and yet his last word with them is full of blessing. He has a blessing for all the tribes, though all the tribes had in turn grieved his spirit. It is a graceful thing to die scattering benedictions—for the old man to feel that life is just about over, and that before he dies he will distribute his legacies—legacies of benediction. It is the most graceful way of departing out of this life to another, leaving a blessing behind, while we, ourselves, are going into the fullness of the blessing to come. But the blessing of Moses was graceful at the close of his life because it was constant with all of his life that went before. Had he lived cursing, it would have been absurd, if not impious, to die blessing. I would not wish to have that man's benediction in words on his deathbed who never gave a benediction in actions while he was in his life. But the whole course of Moses' life was that of blessing the people. He had been a nursing father to them. He carried them in his bosom. Often he stood in the gap between them and an angry God. He had spared them by acting as a Mediator when the sword of vengeance was drawn against them. Countless blessings had been bestowed upon them through him. Was it not his rod that worked wonders in the field of Zoan? Was it not his hand which was stretched over the Red Sea, by which God made a way for his people? Did not his rod, when it smote the rock, bring forth the liquid stream? Was it not by his voice that God communicated to them that the manna should drop around their camps? He had blessed them from the very first moment that he had come into contact with them, for he came forth from the palace of Pharaoh, giving up all the riches that might have been his, that he might side with his brethren and began to fight their battles, smiting the Egyptian and hiding his body in the sand. It was from this cause that he was banished from the courts and when he returned, again, it was with the same resolute determination to abide with his people, and the same warm heart towards them. Brothers and Sis-

ters, if you wish to give your children a blessing when you die, be a blessing to them while you live! If you would make your last words worth the hearing, let your whole life be worth the seeing. It is graceful to die blessing, but let it be always consistent with the blessedness of our former life.

The particular blessing which he gave to Joseph shall now have our attention and, first, we shall notice *the blessing, itself*, which he wished to Joseph. And, secondly, *the peculiar form in which he worded it*. And, when we have thought that over, it shall be in our heart to *wish the same to all who are present here*. First, then, let us look at—

I. THE GREAT BLESSING WHICH MOSES WISHED CONFERRED UPON JOSEPH.

The good will of God—“the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush.” I would like any man’s good will. The better the man is, the more I would desire to have his good will. If it did not come to the *benefacit* or the good doing, I would like him to think benevolently towards me, to have his good will, if I never derived any particular good directly from him. One does not like to go to bed and feel you have an ill will from any man. Certainly, it is always well to feel that we have no ill will, ourselves, towards any, but that our good will reaches out to all! One would like to have the good will of wise men who could counsel us, and of great men who could help us. One would like to have the good will of angels, to know that they cheerfully obey the Divine Command to watch over us. But how much superior to all this is the good will of God—the good will of Him whose will is power, whose wish is fact, who has but to will it and the good that is willed becomes our good in very deed! Oh, ‘tis a high blessing to have the good will of God! Beloved, our heart wishes this to everyone here present, and every Christian wishes this for their children, wishes it for their household, wishes it for their neighbor, wishes it for their fellow countrymen. May the good will of God be with you!

For, Beloved, in the first place, *this is the fountain of every blessing*. It is from the good will of God that every good thing which comes to us takes its rise. Election is according to the pleasure of His good will. He chose us because He would choose us—because He had a good will towards us. Redemption springs from that good will. What else but good will could give the Savior to such unworthy ones as we were? Our calling into the Divine Life is a work of His good will! Our preservation in that life, our growth in it and all the blessings with which God loads that life to make it blessed—all these are fruits of His good will! You cannot find a single blessing that comes to us by the way of merit. We may say of every blessing, it is according to His loving kindness and His tender mercies. He forgave us because He had a good will towards us. He restored us from our wanderings because of His good will. He daily cleanses us and

He makes us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light—and all because of His good will. To what else can we ascribe the Covenant of Grace? To what else can all the blessings which are pledged to us by that Covenant be attributed? It is according to His good will. In wishing, therefore, to anyone that he may have the good will of God that dwelt in the bush, you are wishing to him the fountainhead of all mercies—you are wishing to him the infinity, the immensity, the Immutability of the goodness and love of God! It is a comprehensive blessing—and who is able to tell all its heights and depths?

The good will of God is also *the sweetener of all other blessings*. It is the source of them! It is the sweetener of them. Everything that comes from God to us derives a double blessedness when we feel that they are the fruit of His good will. Take spiritual mercies—though they are, in themselves, so rich that none can estimate their value, yet is there a peculiar brightness put upon them when we know these come from God's love! These are all tokens of His favor towards us, His people. And truly, Brothers and Sisters, the lower mercies of daily life become more blessed to us as we know they come from His good will! As you cut that loaf of bread, each slice of it is flavored with His good will. When you put on your garments tomorrow morning, though they are those in which you exercise your toilsome labors, yet are they tokens of God's good will as much as those coats of skins which God gave to our first parents! Yes, Beloved, sitting here tonight, this air we breathe, the power to breathe it and the health which enabled us to come up to the House of Prayer, and this House, itself, and the ears with which we hear the words, and the good tidings which are given us to hear—all these are of His good will, and are the sweeter because we recognize the favor of God in them!

Oh, to have temporal blessings with a curse—that is a dreadful thing! I hardly know a text more fearful to contemplate than that one, “I will curse your blessings.” Oh, if God makes any bitter, how bitter the wormwood and the gall must be! If He puts death in the pot in which the broth is made to sustain life, what death must there be when He shall deal out the poisoned cup of His eternal wrath to the ungodly! Sweet, indeed, are blessings when they are thus honeyed with His love, but would they be if, instead thereof, they were seasoned and salted with His wrath? Be thankful, Christian, for I will venture to say that this makes even our trials pleasant to us when we know that they also are the fruits of His good will! We cannot always make our hearts believe that the rod is a good thing. We cannot always persuade our unbelief that our dark, heavy, gloomy hours are really for our good—but they are so—and we shall believe this when we perceive that they are sent out of good will to us! Not out of anger, but out of love—love to us that He may love us right up out of our sins, love us away from our infirmities and love us into a higher state of

Grace—attracting us by His Divine Love till we become like He! Note, then, the two things—it is a great blessing because it is the source of all blessings, and the sweetener of all blessings!

But the next consideration about this is—and let us carefully notice it—that, nevertheless, *it surpasses all other blessings*. The good will of Him that dwelt in the bush is a greater blessing than all the blessings in the world—what if I say in Heaven, itself? Besides, Brothers and Sisters, all the blessings in the world without this are less than nothing! And if they were all gone, if that were conceivable, and yet we had this left to us, we need not regret the loss of all, since we should find all in God! You remember how the old Puritan put it? He had been rich and then was brought to poverty, and he said he didn't find much difference, for, he said, when he was rich, he found God in all, and now that he was poor, he found all in God! Perhaps the latter is the higher state of the two. Without God, alas, my Soul, if you were in Paradise! But with God, oh, joy and bliss if you were in prison! All the things put together shall perish in the using—like leaves of the forest, they shall wither before long. But You, my God, are an unwithering Tree of Life, and under You I shall always have shade—I shall sit down beneath Your shadow with great delight, and shall always have food, for Your fruit is sweet unto my taste. I will rejoice in You, for Your good will is better than all things!

I will tell you what it is—you who have not this good will. If you should lose everything else and you have to win it, you would make a good bargain. If you have not God's good will and could not have it except by losing the sight of your eyes, and the hearing of your ears, and the renouncing of all your bodily and mental faculties—if you could not have the good will of God without losing house, home and friends, you might cheerfully, gladly, at once close in with the negotiation and say, "Let me have God's good will and I will take whatever He pleases, or lose whatever He takes!" But let me remind you that you have not to lose these things to get His good will. If you have His good will, you may know it by this—will you accept the gift which He presents to you in His dear Son? Having nothing, will you take Christ to be yours? Being naked, and poor, and miserable, will you let Him be your raiment and your riches? If so, You have God's will, you have God's good will, for you have Christ, who is the good will of God towards us, Incarnated in the flesh. The Lord grant each one of us, then, this blessing—to have His good will. And now, secondly—

II. THIS BLESSING IS PUT IN A VERY PECULIAR FORM.

He says, "The good will of Him that dwelt in the bush." And why did he put it so? Was it, first, because Moses looked back to the appearance of God in the bush with peculiar delight on account of its being the first manifestation of God to his soul? I have no doubt that Moses had fellow-

ship with God, before, but we do not read that he ever had an appearance of the Divine Being to him until he was at the back side of the desert near to Horeb. And there he saw God in the burning bush. Beloved, we always set most store—at least I do—in our memory upon the first appearance of God to us. It brings the tears to my eyes when I recollect those words of the old hymn—

***“Do mind the place, the spot of ground,
Where you did meet Jesus!”***

Ah, I do mind it, and always shall, while memory holds her seat! I may forget anything else, but I shall never forget that! And though I have had many, many manifestations to the comfort of my heart, yet that first one has peculiar charms. And I do not marvel that Moses called his God, The God Who Dwelt in the Bush. Now, have not some of you remembrances of the first days when the love of your espousals was warm in you, and when the manifestations of Jesus were bright to you? Well then, wish to others that the good will of God, who appeared to you behind the hedge, or out in the field, or down in the saw pit, or at your bedside in your chamber—the good will of Him that said to you, “I have blotted out your sins like a cloud”—wish that that good will may rest upon your kinsfolk and your friends!

Is it not also very likely that Moses mentioned that peculiar circumstance in his blessing because *God on that occasion pledged Himself to him?* He gave that burning bush to be a token to Moses, and a sign. And that token had been redeemed—and that good old man, at the end of the last 40 years of his life, remembered how God had appeared to him when he was 80 years of age and given him that pledge! And now that he was 120 years old, God had redeemed it! He had been true to him for 40 years. Have not we some pledges and tokens? Have not you some place where the Lord appeared to you and said, “Certainly, I will be with you, and will bring you again unto this place”? Are there no remembrances in your soul in which a faithful God has pledged His promise to you, and has redeemed it? If so, each man will know his own case, and each man, if he speaks naturally, will wish a blessing for others, according to his own experience of the blessed God! I do not wonder that after Moses had seen God redeem the token of the burning bush, when he wished to convey the idea that the good will of a faithful Covenant-keeping God should rest upon His servant Joseph—the tribe thereof—should say, “The good will of Him that dwelt in the bush.”

Moreover, at that time, in the bush *God did show Himself as a Covenant God.* He began thus, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” He was a Covenant God. Brothers and Sisters, may you have the good will of a Covenant God! I often wonder what those do who do not know the Covenant of Grace. It seems to me to be the richest well of consolation that God has ever dug—the Covenant or-

dered in all things and sure. It was the stay of David on his deathbed. It is the comfort of many of God's Davids in the battle of life. I wish tonight with all my heart, dear Friends, that you may not look for the good will of an absolute God out of Christ, but look for and enjoy the will of God who has pledged Himself to you in your Representative, Christ Jesus, in the Eternal Covenant of His Love. I think that is another reason why Moses put it in that form.

And, perhaps Moses looked upon that bush *as the place of His call to a more active life*, and regarded God in a different light from that time forth from what he had ever regarded Him before. His own name was Moses. He was drawn out of the water and now he might have changed his name, for God had called him out of the fire! Now he saw the God of fire. Oh, there are some Believers that have never got to this. They, I hope, have renounced the world as Moses did when he counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt! They have also got into the wilderness where Moses was—they are separated, they love contemplation and they live near to God—but they have never been called into active service. That third 40 years of Moses' life was the crowning part of all his career. The 40 years with Pharaoh, the 40 years in the desert, all prepared him for the 40 years in the wilderness with his people. But some Christians have not begun that last period of their lives! I wish they had, and I shall be glad and rejoice if, tonight, the Lord should appear to any of His servants and call them, saying, "I have called you to bring sinners out of Egypt, and to set them free." If He ever does, when you come in later times to pronounce a blessing upon others, you will put it thus, "The God that called me to preach the Gospel, the God that led me as His servant, be with you, each one of you!" And if that is the form in which you put the blessing, it will be a very rich one!

But now I will come back to the words again. What did Moses mean? We see why he used the term, but what did he mean by saying, "The good will of Him that dwelt in the bush be with you"? Did not he mean, first, "May the *blessings of condescension ennoble you*"? What condescension for God to dwell in a bush! Had the Eternal dwelt in a cedar, it would have been a stoop, but for Him to dwell in the uncouth-shaped, worthless shrub—a bush—oh, this was matchless! Oh, Beloved, may everyone of us know what it is for God to condescend to dwell with us! We are as the bushes of the heath. There is nothing in us that fits us for God's mercy. What are we, and what is our father's house? Why should the Lord look upon us—perhaps as little in talent as we are in merit, low in our own esteem—but much more low in very deed and truth? Oh, may the Lord deal with each one of you in His condescending way! He is known to give His mercy condescendingly. "He has put down the mighty from their seat and He has exalted them of low degree. He has filled the

hungry with good things, but the rich He has sent away empty.” After that fashion may He deal with you! And if He should do so, then how ennobled will you be, for that bush in Horeb had a greater Glory about it than the cedars of Lebanon! It was but a bush, but it was a bush in which God had dwelt! And you, too—you will have to say, “Your gentleness has made me great. He has lifted the poor from the dunghill and set him among princes, even the princes of His people.” A drop of Grace gives more honor than a world of fame. One spark of love of Christ is more ennobling to your heart into which it falls than though it were all ablaze with the stars and orders of all the knighthoods of the kingdom! The love of God makes poor men truly rich, little men supremely great, the despised to be honorable and the nothing to be lifted up among the mighty! I wish you, then, Beloved, God’s condescending love to ennoble you—“the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush.” Or, as we might read it, “the good will of the Shekinah of the bush,” for that is the very same Shekinah that shone between the cherub wings! The good will of Him that dwells upon the Throne in Heaven is the good will of Him that dwells in humble and contrite hearts today!

But Moses, however, meant something more than that. Did not he mean that he wished to Joseph’s tribe indwelling and mysterious mercies—“*the good will of Him that dwelt—dwelt in the bush*”? It was a strange dwelling. Can anyone understand how God, who is everywhere, can be in one place in particular? And shall anyone tell us how He, who is greater than all space, should yet dwell in a bush—in a *bush*? He that sets the heavens on a blaze with lightning and kindles all the stars, comes down and sets a bush aglow with His Divine Presence! It is mysterious. Oh, may everyone of us know the mysterious good will of the indwelling Spirit of God! Do you know it? Do you know it? Oh, Beloved, as the fire was in the bush, is the Spirit in you? Do you know He is there? Search yourselves! If He is there, may He tell you—and if He is not there, oh, may some sparks of that Divine Fire fall into your nature now—enough, at least, to make you desire more and set you longing and praying for the wondrous blessing of an indwelling Spirit! Ignatius of old used to call himself, “Theophorus,” or, “the God-Bearer.” Truly, every Christian is such a God-Bearer. “I will dwell in them and walk in them.” “I will put My Spirit within you, and you shall walk in My way.” Surely Moses meant that—at least, the sense is in his words. May you enjoy the mysterious indwelling and the blessings that come from it!

Further, did not the man of God mean that *Joseph might possess enlightening blessings*? “The good will of Him that dwelt in the bush” means this—He set the bush alight and it became a luminary. It had light. It gave forth light. It had light more abundantly. It was a dark bush—God came into it and it caught the attention of Moses,

though it seems to have been daylight. He was watching his flock, but so bright was this that it outshone the sun! And Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight." A *bush is not a great sight*—it was God that made the bush so bright that it became a great sight! May you, Beloved, have the light of God's Spirit to reveal to you God's Truth! And may that light be in you so brightly that others may see it and learn God's Truth through you! What is the Scripture to us, unless God shines on it? The Bible is only like a country signpost at the turning of a road in a dark night. Unless there is the Light of God to read it by, the signpost is of no service. We need the Spirit of God to shine on the Scriptures! O God, come into us and give us Your Light! We need You. Let this be a token of Your good will to us.

But that is not all. Surely Moses meant, "May the Lord grant you the blessings of trial and *the blessings of preservation*." For all through the various branches and twigs of that bush, there went a fire, a devouring fire, a fire that would have licked it up as the blaze licks up the stubble in a single moment! Yet that fire in its nature was preserving, as well as consuming and, through the goodness of God, the bush was as safe when it was ablaze as it had been before. Beloved, how I wish for you that whenever fiery trials may come, the consuming fire may spend itself upon your corruptions, but oh, may God grant that there may be nothing in it that shall touch your better nature! May it be a conserving as well as a consuming fire! We do, some of us, acknowledge to have been in the furnace when it has been heated very hot. Weary nights have been appointed to us and days of anguish of body and of sinking of spirit. We have lain cast out even from the Presence of God, sometimes in our apprehensions, in the very deeps of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and God—blessed be His name—He has sent the fire and come with it, and we have not been consumed, but can sing this day of judgment and of mercy! That mingled song is well set forth in the bush that burned, but was not burnt—burned, but was not consumed! I would not wish for any of you perfect immunity from trouble, lest you should miss the coming through tribulation into the inheritance of the Kingdom of God, but I do pray for you that when the trouble comes, the God that raised the trouble may come with it, so that you may be burned, but not consumed!

I will not tarry longer over this explanation of the text, but now most earnestly and from my heart I wish to you, Beloved, this blessing. May "the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush" dwell with you! In your dwellings, may His good will dwell. Whatever your homes may be, may God be with you there. May His good will be with your husband, with your wife and your children, your servants, your business, your field, your estate. May He that dwelt in the bush condescend to dwell in that little chamber and that narrow room! If a bush can hold Him, so can

your poor room! If a bush revealed Him, so can your bed—yes, and your sickbed, too. Believe in it—that God’s good will can perfume every chamber of your dwelling, can make your going out and your coming in to be blessed, and all your ways the same! I wish for you, Beloved, that “the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush” may dwell with you wherever you may be!

Are you like Moses just now, alone and solitary in a wilderness? Have you come into this great city, and are you yet feeling as if you were a lone person, as in a desert? May “the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush” be with you and may God reveal Himself to you in your solitude, as He did to the Prophet at Horeb. Perhaps you will be called from this day forth to conflict, as Moses stood before Pharaoh, and had to face the wrath of the king. May you confound your adversaries and be very mighty for your God! Possibly God intends to give you success in your service—like Moses, you will bring out Israel from under bondage. May “the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush” keep you sober in success and humble in prosperity! Perhaps before you there shall soon be a difficulty as great as that which met the children of Israel before Pharaoh—you will come to the Red Sea—the rocks will be on either hand. Pursuers may be behind you. May the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush and was with Moses, be with you in the hour of stern trial. Through your Red Sea, may the Lord lead you, as He led the children of Israel like a flock!

Perhaps you will be subject to many provocations, as Moses was from the people whom he loved. They spoke of stoning him. They murmured against the Lord and against His servant, Moses. May you be as meek as Moses, because the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush shall overshadow you! Possibly you may have a long life of Christian service before you. It may be for 40 years you will have to carry a people in your bosom, and nurture them for the Lord. My Brothers in the ministry, I wish the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush to be with you through all your toilsome tasks. Perhaps you are soon to die. Old age is creeping upon you. May you die like Moses, blessing the people with the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush with you to your last moment! And may your spirit climb her Pisgah and look from the top of Nebo, and have a view of the Glory to be revealed—the brooks that flow with milk and honey, and the goodly land! May you see it, even unto Lebanon, and in those last moments of yours, before your spirit melts into Glory, may “the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush” still be with you! Beloved, this is wished to you all! And I speak not my wish, but the benediction of the Lord upon all His servants, “The good will of Him that dwelt in the bush be with you.” But, alas, all here are not servants of God. Yet even to them will I—

III. ANXIOUSLY DESIRE THAT THIS WISH MAY BE FULFILLED TO YOU ALL.

Oh, Sinner, tonight may He that dwelt in the bush call you! Moses little thought of it. He was keeping sheep, but a burning bush was enough to attract him. These few simple, feeble, but affectionate words, may, perhaps, be like the bush to you. Or if not, perhaps, a trouble at home will come and be like a thorn bush to you. I pray it may, and may God be in the bush! I do desire that God would in some way speak to you careless ones and arrest you, for you must come to know Him, or you will everlastingly perish! And may you be humbled in the Presence of God, each one of you, as Moses was, for he took off his shoes, feeling that the place whereon he stood was holy ground, and he was unholy. May you feel the solemnity of your position—a dying man soon to meet his Maker—a guilty man soon to meet his Judge—a despiser of Christ soon to see Christ on His Throne! O Soul, may you put off your carelessness and have done with your neglect, and begin to pray! And as the Lord of the burning bush said to Moses that He knew the sorrows of his people, I do pray, oh Sinner, that when you stand humbly before the Presence of God, you may see that God has pity upon you! May you look to Jesus on the Cross and see where He was like a bush that was burned with the anger of God, though not consumed—and may you, as you look, hear Him say, “I know your sorrows, for I have borne your sins and carried your transgressions for you.” And oh, may you find peace tonight!

Oh, it does not matter whether it is the back side of the desert, or the back gallery of the Tabernacle, or down below, beneath the galleries, or where it is—it will be a blessed spot to you if you find God tonight! Moses could never forget that spot near to Horeb, neither will you if the Lord should appear to you! It matters not who the preacher is, though he should be no more than a bush, yet shall he be an angel of God to you! The Lord grant that such an appearance may come to you by faith. May you look to Christ tonight, for, if not, you will have to see God, by-and-by, as a consuming fire! And remember this word, “Beware, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you!” May you never know the meaning of that, but on the contrary, may “the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush” be with you! Amen and amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EXODUS 3.**

Verse 1. *Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.* It must have been a great change for Moses, after 40 years in the court of Pharaoh, to be spending another 40 years in the wilderness. But it was not wasted time—it required the first two periods to make Moses fit for the grand life of the last

forty. He must be a prince and he must be a shepherd, that he might be both a ruler and a shepherd to God's people, Israel. He must be much alone. He must have many solitary conversations with his own heart. He must be led to feel his own weakness. And this will be no loss of time to him—he will do more in the last 40 years because of the 80 years thus spent in preparation! And it is not lost time that a man takes in putting on his harness before he goes to the battle, or that the reaper spends in sharpening his scythe before he cuts down the corn.

2. *And the Angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, but the bush was not consumed.* How near God seemed in those ages when He could be beheld in a bush or sitting under an oak! And is He not equally near us if we are but prepared for His Presence? Surely pure eyes are scarce, or sights of God would be more frequent, for “the pure in heart shall see God.”

3-5. *And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And He said, Draw not near here: take off your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.* God is not to be viewed by curiosity—He is not to be approached by presumption. A holy trembling well becomes the man who would commune with the Most Holy God. We are not fit for communion with God without some measure of preparation. There is something to be put off before we can behold the Lord.

6. *Moreover He said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.* Partly because of the universal superstition that if God appeared to any man, he would surely die—but in Moses' case, perhaps more because of an appreciation of the holiness of God and of his own unworthiness. There is not a man among us but who must do as Moses did if we are in a right state of mind. They who think they are perfect might presume to look, but they who are truly so, as Moses was, would, as he did, hide his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

7. *And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows.* Beautiful verse. God had seen and God had heard, as if their griefs had had two avenues to His heart. God sees not with eyes, and hears not with ears, as we do, but He speaks after the manner of men, and He says by two ways they had reached his very soul—“I have surely seen the affliction—I have heard their cries.” And then He adds, as if to show the perfection of His sympathy with them, “I

know their sorrows.” Now it is quite true today concerning us and concerning our God—He has seen, He has heard and He knows—“I know their sorrows.” When the sorrow is known, then God begins to work. He is no passive spectator of the misery of His chosen, but His hands go with His heart.

8. *And I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good and a large land, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.* “Now, therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto Me,” and when the cry of God’s children goes unto Him, depend upon it, there will be something moving before long! When a father hears the cries of his children, when a mother hears the cry of her baby, it is not long before there will be a movement of the heart and of the hands! I am sure, Brothers and Sisters, there have been crises in English history which have been entirely due to the prayers of God’s people. There have been singular occurrences which the mere reader of history cannot understand, but there is a number still alive who wait upon God in prayer, and they make history. There is more history made in the closet than in the cabinet of the ministry. There is a greater power at the back of the throne than the carnal eye can see, and that power is the cry of God’s children!

9-10. *Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come unto Me: and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send you unto Pharaoh, that you may bring forth My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.* I do not wonder that Moses opened his eyes when he knew what a poor creature he was for God to say, “Come now, therefore, and I will send you unto Pharaoh”—the very man whose life was sought by Pharaoh—“I will send you unto Pharaoh”—the man who had been rejected by his own people when he took their part—“You may bring forth My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” Oh, let us be ready for any commission! If God were to say that He would build up Heaven by the poorest and meanest among us, it would not be for us to draw back! Let Him do what He wills with us! Oh, for a faith to believe that in the midst of our weakness, God’s strength would appear.

—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.**

SHOES OF IRON AND STRENGTH SUFFICIENT—A NEW YEAR'S PROMISE NO. 2062

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 6, 1889.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 29, 1888.**

***“And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren and let him dip his foot in oil. Your shoes shall be iron and brass; and as your days, so shall your strength be.”
Deuteronomy 33:24-25.***

I ONCE heard an old minister say that he thought the blessing of Asher was peculiarly the blessing of ministers. And his eyes twinkled as he added, “At any rate, they are usually blessed with children and it is a great blessing for them if they are acceptable to their Brethren and if they are so truly anointed that they even dip their foot in oil.” Well, well, I pray that all of us who preach the Gospel may enjoy this triplet of blessings in the highest sense. If our quiver is not full of children according to the flesh, yet may we have many born unto God through our ministry.

May we be blessed by being made spiritual fathers to very many who shall be brought by us to receive life, pardon, peace and holiness through our Lord Jesus. What is the use of our life if it is not so? To what end have we preached unless we see souls born into the family of Divine Grace? My inmost soul longs to see all my hearers born anew—this would be my greatest joy, my highest blessing.

Ask for me the blessing of Asher—“Let Asher be blessed with children.” And may the Lord make my spiritual offspring to be as the sands upon the seashore.

It is a great blessing from the Lord when our speech is sweet to the ears of saints—when we have something to bring forth which our Brethren in Christ can accept and which comes to them with a peculiar preciousness and power so that they can receive it and feel that it is thoroughly acceptable to them. We do not wish to be acceptable to the worldly wise, nor to the error-hunters of the day. But we are very anxious to be pleasant to the Lord's own children—our Brothers and Sisters in Christ. They have a holy taste whereby they discern spiritual meats and we would bring forth for food that which they will account to be nourishing and savory. Every minister prays to be “acceptable to his Brethren.”

And what could we do without the third blessing, namely that of unction? “Let him dip his foot in oil.” Oh, for an anointing of the Holy Spirit, not only upon the head with which we think, but upon the foot with which we move! We would have our daily walk and conversation gracious and useful. We wish that wherever we go, we may leave behind us the print of

Divine Grace. I was asking concerning a preacher what kind of man he was, and the simple, humble cottager, answered me, "Well, Sir, he is this kind of man—if he comes to see you, you know that he has been."

We must not only have oil in the lamps of our public ministry but oil in the vessels of our private study. We need the holy oil everywhere upon every garment, even down to our shoes. I know that there are mockers who scoff at the very mention of unction. But I pray that to myself and my Brethren the promise may be fulfilled, "He shall dip his foot in oil." Such a man, anointed with fresh oil, holds an unquestioned office, enjoys an un-failing freshness and exercises an effectual influence. Wherever he goes you see his footprints, for his foot has been dipped in oil.

Well, now, if these three blessings are good for ministers, they are equally good for all sorts of workers. You in the school, you who visit tract districts, you who manage mothers' meetings and you who in any shape or form endeavor to make Christ known, may you have the threefold blessing! The Lord give you many spiritual children—may you be blessed with them and never be without additions to their number! The Lord make you acceptable to those among whom you labor. And the Lord grant you always to go forth in His strength, anointed with His Spirit!

That is the first part of our text and I am not going to say any more about it, as the second part is that to which I shall call your especial attention. May the Holy Spirit make the promise exceeding sweet to you and grant you a full understanding of it. "Your shoes shall be iron and brass. And as your days, so shall your strength be."

There are two things in the text—shoes and strength—we will talk about these two, hoping to possess them both.

I. "YOUR SHOES SHALL BE IRON AND BRASS." That is a very great promise and I fear that I shall not be able to bring out all its meaning in one discourse.

I find that the passage has several translations. And, though I think that which we have now before us is by far the best, yet I cannot help mentioning the others for I think they are instructive. These interpretations may serve me as divisions in opening up the meaning. I take it as a rule that the Lord's promises are true in every sense which they will fairly bear. A generous man will allow the widest interpretation of his words and so will the infinitely gracious God.

This promise meant that Asher should have treasures under his feet—that there should, in fact, be mines of iron and copper within the boundaries of the tribe. Metals enrich nations and help their advancement in many ways. Tribes that possess minerals are thereby made rich, whatever metals those may be. But such useful metals as iron and copper would prove of the utmost service to the people of that time if they knew how to use them. Is there any spiritual promise at all in this? Asher is made rich and iron and copper lay beneath his feet. Are saints ever made rich with treasures under their feet? Undoubtedly they are.

The Word of God has mines in it. Even the surface of it is rich and it brings forth food for us. But it is with Scripture, as Job says, it is with the earth—"As for the earth, out of it comes bread: and under it is turned up

as it were fire. The stones of it are the place of sapphires: and it has dust of gold.” There are treasures upon the surface of the Word which we may pick up very readily—even the casual reader will find himself able to understand the simplicities and elements of the Gospel of God.

But the Word of God yields most to the digger. He that can study hard and press into the inner meaning—he is the man that shall be enriched with riches current in heavenly places. Every Bible student here will know that God has put under his feet great treasures of precious teaching and he will by meditation sink shafts into the deep places of Revelation. I wish we gave more time to our Bibles. We waste too much time upon the pretentious, poverty-stricken literature of the age. And some, even Christian people, are more taken up with works of fiction than they are with this great Book of everlasting fact. We should prosper much more in heavenly farming if we would “dig deep while sluggards sleep.” Remember that God has given us treasures under our feet. But do not despise His gifts as to leave the mines of Revelation unexplored.

You will find these treasures, not only in the Word of God, but everywhere in the Providence of God if you will consider the ways of the Lord and believe that God is everywhere at work. He that looks for a Providence will not be long without seeing one. All events are full of teaching to the man that has but Divine Grace and wit to interpret them. “Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.” There shall be treasures under your feet if your feet keep to the ways of the Truth of God. A rich land is the country along which Believers travel to their rest—its stones are iron and out of its heart you may dig brass.

“Who is wise and he shall understand these things? Prudent and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right.” The Revised Version has it, “Your bars shall be iron and brass.” And certainly the original text bears that meaning. “Your bars shall be iron and brass”—there shall be protection around him. The city gates shall be kept fast against the enemy, so as to preserve the citizens. The slaughtering foe shall not be able to intrude—instead of the common wooden bar, which might be sufficient in more peaceful times, there shall be given bars of metal, not easily cut in sunder or removed.

Herein I see a spiritual blessing for us, also. What a mercy it is, when God strengthens our gates and secures the bars so that, when the enemy comes, he is not able to enter or to molest us! Peace from all assaults, safety under all alarms, shutting in from all attacks—this is a priceless gift. Happy are the people who have God for their Protector! Blessed are they who rest in the sure promises and faithfulness of God, for they may laugh their enemies to scorn. O Brethren, how safe are they whose trust is in the living God and in His Covenant and promise!

Personally I know what this means. I have rested as calmly in the center of the battle as ever I have reposed in the deepest calm—with all against me I am as quiet in soul as when everyone called himself my friend. It is true—“Your bars shall be iron and brass.” Still, I like the old version best and the original certainly bears it, “Your *shoes* shall be iron

and brass.” The Revised Version puts this in the margin—“he shall have protection for his feet.” The chief objection that has been raised to this is that it would be a very unusual thing for shoes to be made of iron and brass. Such a thing is not heard of anywhere else in Scripture, neither is it according to Oriental custom.

For that reason I judge that the interpretation is the more likely to be correct, since the protection which God gives to His people is unusual. No other feet shall wear so singular a covering. But those who are made strong in the Lord shall be able to wear shoes of iron and the Lord shall give them sandals of brass. As Og, the King of Bashan, was of the race of the giants and “his bedstead was a bedstead of iron,” so shall the Lord’s champions wear shoes of iron. Theirs is no common equipment, for they are no common people.

God’s people are a peculiar people and everything about them is peculiar. Even if the poetry of the passage would not bear to run upon all fours, there is no reason why it should, since it only relates to shoes. We may be quite content to take the notion of iron and brazen shoes with all its strangeness and even let the strangeness be a commendation of it. You have peculiar difficulties, you are a peculiar people, you traverse a peculiar road, you have a peculiar God to trust in and you may, therefore, find peculiar consolation in a peculiar promise—“Your shoes shall be iron and brass”—

***“With shoes of iron and of brass,
Over burning chemicals your feet shall pass,
Tread dragons down, from fear set free;
For as your day your strength shall be.*”**

But what does this mean—“Your shoes shall be iron and brass”? Are there not several meanings? Does it not mean that our feet, tender and unprotected by nature, shall receive protection—protection from God? Our feebleness and necessity shall call upon God’s Grace and skill and He will provide for us and give to us exactly what we, by reason of our feebleness, so much need.

We want to have shoes of iron and brass, first, to travel with. We are pilgrims. We journey along a road which has not been smoothed by a steamroller, but remains rough and rugged as the path to an Alpine summit. We push on through a wilderness where there is no way. Sometimes we traverse a dreary road, comparable to a burning sand. At other times sharp trials afflict us as if they cut our feet with flints. Our journey is a maze, a labyrinth—the Lord leads us up and down in the wilderness and sometimes we seem further from Canaan than ever.

Seldom does our march take us through gardens—often it leads us through deserts. We are always traveling, never long in one stay. Sometimes the fiery cloudy pillar rests for a little but it is only for a little. “Forward,” is our watchword! We have no abiding city here. We pitch our tent by the wells and palms of Elim but we strike it in the morning, when the silver bugle sounds, “Up and away!” And so we march to Marah, or to the place of the fiery serpents. Ever onward, ever forward, ever moving! This is our lot. Be it so. Our equipment betokens it—we have appropriate shoes for this perpetual journey. We are not shod with the skins of beasts but

with metals which will endure all wear and tear. Is it not written, "Your shoes shall be iron and brass"? However long the way, these shoes will last to the end.

Perhaps I address some friend whose way is especially rough. You seem to be more tried than anybody else. You reckon yourself to be more familiar with sorrow than anyone you know—affliction has marked you for its own. I pray you take home this promise to yourself by faith—the Lord says to you, "Your shoes shall be iron and brass." This special route of yours, which is beset with so many difficulties—your God has prepared you for it. You are shod as none but the Lord's chosen are shod. If your way is singular, so are your shoes. You shall be able to traverse this thorny road—to journey along it with profit to yourself and with glory to God.

For your traveling days you are well fitted, for your shoes are iron and brass—

***"If the sorrows of your case
Seem peculiar still to you,
God has promised needful grace,
'As your days, your strength shall be.' "***

Shoes of iron remind us of military array—they are meant to fight with. Brethren, we are soldiers, as well as pilgrims. These shoes are meant for trampling upon enemies. All sorts of deadly things lie in our way and it is by the help of these shoes that the promise is made good. "You shall tread upon the lion and adder. The young lion and the dragon shall you trample under foot." Are we not often too much like the young man Jether, who was bidden by his father to slay Zebah and Zalmunna but he was afraid? We tremble to put our foot upon the neck of the enemy. We fancy that if we should attempt it, we should be guilty of presumption. Let us have done with this false humility, for thus we dishonor the Lord's promise—"Your shoes shall be iron and brass."

Better far to say, "Through You will we push down our enemies—through Your name will we tread them under that rise up against us." Thus we may say without fear, for assuredly "The Lord shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly." "O my Soul, you have trod down strength," said the holy woman of old, when the adversaries of Israel had been routed. Thus can our exultant spirits also take up the chant. I also can say, "O my Soul, you have trod down strength." Yes, Believer, with your foot you have crushed your foe, even as your Lord, who came on purpose that He might break with His foot, even with His bruised heel, the head of our serpent adversary.

Be not afraid, therefore, in the day of conflict, to push onward against the foe. Do not be afraid to seize the victory which Christ has already secured for you. "Your shoes shall be iron and brass"—you shall trample down your foe and march unharmed to victory.

What a blessing it is when we get self under our feet! We shall have good use for iron shoes if we keep him there. What a mercy it is when you get a sinful habit under your feet! You will need shoes of brass to keep it there. What a mercy it is when some temptation that you have long struggled with at last falls to the ground and you can set your foot upon it! You need to have both of your shoes strengthened with iron, and hardened

with brass, that you may bruise this spiritual enemy and crush out its life. Feet shod with sound metal of integrity and firmness will be none too strong in this evil world, where so many, like serpents, are ready to bite at our heels. Only so shod shall we win the victory. See, the Lord promises that we shall have shoes suitable alike for traveling and for trampling upon enemies!

Next, we have shoes fit for climbing. One interpreter thinks that the sole of the shoe was to be studded with iron or copper nails. Certainly those who climb would not like to go with the smooth soles which suit us in our parlors and drawing rooms. There are many instances where a rough tip of iron, or a strong nail in the heel of the shoe, has checked the slipping mountaineer when gliding over a shelving rock and there he has stayed on the very brink of death. Our spiritual life is an upward climb with constant danger of a fall. It is a great mercy to have shoes of iron and brass in our spiritual climbing, that should our feet be almost gone, we may find foothold before we are utterly cast down.

We ought to climb—the higher our spiritual life the better. It is written of the Believer, “He shall dwell on high.” We ought not to be satisfied till we reach the highest places of knowledge, experience and practice. High doctrine is glorious doctrine, high experience is blessed experience, high holiness is heavenly living. Many souls always keep in the plains—the simple elements are enough for them. And, thank God, they are enough for salvation and for comfort. But if you want the richest delight and the highest degree of Divine Grace, climb the hills and roam among the mysteries of God, the sublime Revelations of His Divine will.

Especially climb into the Doctrines of Grace—be not afraid of electing love, of special redemption, of the Covenant and all that is contained in it. Be not afraid to climb high, for if your feet are dipped in the oil of Divine Grace, they shall also be so shod that they shall not slip. Trust in God and you shall be as Mount Zion, which can never be removed. Your shoes shall be iron and brass for lofty thought and clear knowledge, if you commit your mind to the instruction of the Lord. Receiving nothing except as you find it in the Word—but in a childlike spirit receiving everything that you find there—you shall stand upon your high places. Your feet shall be like hinds' feet and your place of abode shall be above the mists and clouds of earth's wretched atmosphere of doubt.

Rise, also, to the highest graces and the noblest virtues. As is the food we feed on, such should our actions be. Let us love, for God is love and as dear children we must be imitators of Him in all gentleness, tenderness and forgiveness. Climb to the heights of self-denial, the summits of consecration. Be as near Heaven as is possible for those who dwell on earth. Have you not the shoes to climb with? Why tarry down below? I will not press this longer upon you, for I hope that your hearts aspire to climb up where your Lord reveals Himself in clearer light.

But, lest you should be at all afraid of the climbing as the aged man is afraid of that which is high, I would arouse you to a holy bravery, since God has not given you shoes of iron and brass merely to trip over the plains. He means you to climb. Your equipment prove it. Will you be as

the children of Ephraim, who, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle? Will you be shod with iron and melt like wax under a little heat of opposition?

Once more—these shoes are for traveling, for trampling, for climbing. They are also made of iron and brass for perseverance. You would not need such shoes for a little bit of a run—for a trip up the street and back again. Since the Lord has shod you in this fashion, it is a warning to you that the way is long and weary and the end is not soon. The Lord has furnished you with shoes that will not wear out. “Old shoes and clouted” were good enough for Gibeonites but they are not fit for Israelites. The Lord does not mean that you should be arrayed as beggars, or become lame through worn-out shoes.

The sacred Canticle, in one of its verses, says, “How beautiful are your feet with shoes, O prince’s daughter!” The princes of the heavenly household shall be shod according to their rank and this shall be the case at the end of their journey as surely as at the beginning. Whether Israel traversed sand or rock, the camp never halted because the people had become lame. For the Lord had said, “Your shoes shall be iron and brass.” It is a good pair of shoes that lasts a man for forty years. And there are some of us who can testify that God’s Grace has furnished us with spiritual shoes of that kind. I can speak of nearly that length of time since I knew the Lord and I bear my unhesitating witness that I have found the Grace of God all-sufficient and His promises most sure and steadfast.

If we are allowed to live till we touch the borders of a century, or if we even fulfill our hundred years, these shoes would never be too old. These are the sort of shoes that Enoch wore. And was it not for more than three hundred years that he walked with God? He was always walking, but his shoes of iron and brass were never worn out. It matters not, dear Friend, how severe may your trials and troubles be. Or how long may your pilgrimage through this wilderness be, God, who gives these extraordinary shoes—such as no other has ever fashioned and such as men are not accustomed to wear—has in this provided you against the utmost of endurance, the extremity of suffering.

“Your shoes shall be iron and brass”—does not this symbol signify the best, the strongest, the most lasting, and the most fitting provision for a pilgrimage of trial? Your shoes shall last as long as you shall last. You shall find them as good as new when you are about to lie down on your last bed, to be gathered to your fathers. “Your shoes shall be iron and brass.”

I may be addressing some here that are very low in spirit—they fear that they shall not hold on their way, they are ready to stop, yes, ready to lie down in despair. I trust the way will hold you on when you can hardly hold on your way. May you hear the ring of your iron sandals and be ashamed of cowardice. They should be iron men to whom God has given iron shoes. I would encourage you to go forward in the way, for you are, by God’s Grace, made fit for traveling. You are not bare-footed, nor badly shod. You ought to go forward bravely, after your heavenly Father has put

such shoes as these upon your feet. You are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace and you may trip lightly on your way.

And again I say, though that way should be a very long one, you need not think that your provision for the way will fail you. Even to gray hairs the Lord will be with you. He has made and He will bear. Even He will carry you. Your last days shall be better than your first days. Yes, you shall go from strength to strength through His abounding and faithful love.

I find great difficulty in speaking tonight, because of some failure of my voice. But the Divine promise is so sweet that even when poorly uttered it has a music all its own. For fear my voice should quite fail me, I will hasten on to say a few words upon the second point. We have examined the shoes, now let us consider the strength.

II. "AS YOUR DAYS, SO SHALL YOUR STRENGTH BE." This provision is meant to meet weakness. The words carry a tacit hint to us that we have no strength of our own but have need of strength from Above. Our proud hearts need such a hint. Often we poor creatures begin to rely upon ourselves. Although we are weak as water, we get the notion that our own wit, or our own experience may now suffice us, though once they might not have done so. But our best powers will not suffice us now any more than in our youth.

If we begin to rest in ourselves it will not be long before we find out our folly. The Lord will not let His people depend upon themselves—they may make the attempt but, as surely as they are His people, He will empty them from vessel to vessel and make them know that their fullness dwells in Christ and not in themselves. Remember, if you have a sense of weakness, you have only a sense of the Truth of God. You are as weak as you think you are. You certainly do not exaggerate your own helplessness. The Savior has said, "Without Me, you can do nothing." And that is the full extent of what you can do.

The Lord promises you strength which He would have no need to promise you if you had it naturally apart from Him. But He promises to give it and therein He assures you that you need it. Come down from your self-esteem—stoop from the notion of your own natural ability—divest yourself of the foolish idea that you can do anything in, and of yourself, and come down to the strong for strength and ask your Lord to fulfill this promise in your experience, "As your days, so shall your strength be."

The strength which is here promised is to abide through days. "As your days, so shall your strength be." Not for today, only, but for tomorrow—and for every day—as every day shall come. The longest and the shortest day, the brightest and the darkest day, the wedding and the funeral day, shall each have its strength measured out, till there shall be no more days. The Lord will portion out to His saints their support even as their days follow each other—

***"Days of trial, days of grief,
In succession you may see;
This is still your sweet relief,***

'As your day, your strength shall be.' "

This strength is to be given *daily* We shall never have two days' Grace at a time—

**"Day by day the manna fell—
Oh, to learn this lesson well,
'Day by day' the promise reads—
Daily strength for daily needs!"**

If I get strength enough to get through this sermon, I shall be satisfied for the present. I do not want strength to get through next Sabbath morning's sermon till that Sabbath morning comes. If I can weather the present storm, I shall not just now require the strength to outlive the storms of all the year 1889.

What should I do with this reserve force if I had it? Where would you store away your extra Grace? You would put it in the lumber-room of your pride, where it would breed worms and become an offense. A storage of what you call "grace" would turn into self-sufficiency. "As your days, so shall your strength be"—this secures you a day's burden and a day's help, a day's sorrow and a day's comfort. After all, what more do we want? If a man has a meal, let him give thanks for it—he does not want two meals at once. If a man has enough for the day, he certainly is not yet in want for tomorrow.

He cannot eat tomorrow's food today. Or, if he did, it would injure his health and be of no comfort to him. Let us narrow our vision as to the necessities of daily life, not looking so far ahead as to compress into today more evil than naturally belongs to it. For "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Our strength is to be given to us *daily*. And then the text seems to say clearly that it will be given to us proportionately, "As your days, so shall your strength be." A day of little service, little strength. A day of little suffering, little strength. But in a tremendous day—a day that needs you to play the Samson—you shall have Samson's strength.

A day of deep waters in which you shall need to swim, shall be a day in which you shall ride the billows like a seabird. Do you not think that this might almost tempt us to wish for days of great trial, in order that we might receive great Grace? If we are always to go smoothly and to receive but little grace in consequence, we shall never rise to the great things of the Divine life. We shall be dwarfs and none shall say, "There were giants in those days." We may not wish to be always children with boyish tasks and childish duties. It is right we should grow and that in consequence we should shoulder burdens from which youthful backs are exempt.

Who would wish to be always a little child? Great Grace will be sent to us to meet our great necessities. And is not that a most desirable thing? I remember that for a long season the Lord was very gracious to me in the matter of funds for the extensive works which I have been called upon to originate and superintend—and I felt very grateful for the ease which I enjoyed. Yet it crossed my mind that I was learning less of God than in more trying seasons and I trembled. Years gone by there were considerable necessities which did not appear to be met at once and I went with them to God in prayer and I trusted Him and He supplied my needs in such a wonderful way that I seemed to have the closest communion with Him.

I could most plainly see His hand stretched out to help me. I could see Him working for me as gloriously as if He wrought miracles. These were glorious days with me! I cannot tell you what holy wonder often filled my soul when the Lord interposed on behalf of the Orphanage or the College. The record reads so charmingly that unbelievers would never accept it as true. Then God made me by Divine Grace like one who steps from the summit of one mountain to another—I stepped across the valleys, leaving the deep places far below. So in my easy seasons I thought to myself, “Everything comes in regularly and abundantly. I am like a little child walking along a smooth lawn. This is but a common, ordinary state of affairs, in which even a man of no faith could pursue his way. I do not see so much of God, though assuredly I ought to see Him as clearly now as ever.”

I did not wish for necessities but I remembered how the Lord glorified Himself in them, and therefore I half desired them. The regular blessing day by day, almost without need of special prayer, does not constrain you to look to God so vividly as when you gaze down into the deep, dark abyss of want and feel, “If He does not help me now, I shall soon be in dire distress.” This forces forth the living prayer, “Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble and He saved them out of their distresses.” Our great necessities bring God so very near to us, so manifest to our consciousness that they are an unspeakable blessing.

But I did not ask to have a time of need! I hope that I shall never be so foolish as that. But when I found a time of need hurrying up, as I soon did, I felt a special delight in it—I took pleasure in my necessities. My heart cried, “Now I shall see my Lord! Now I shall see Him again. Now I shall get a hold of that great arm and hang upon it and I shall see how the Lord will deliver me in time of need.” I did thus lay hold upon my Lord again and I found Him still God All-Sufficient, for which I bless His name. In proportion as He sends the trial He sends the help. Be not, therefore, afraid of great trial—on the contrary, look for it, and when it comes, say to yourselves, “Now for great Grace. Now for a special manifestation of the faithfulness of God.”

Mark, again, that strength will be given to us in all forms. “As your days, so shall your strength be.” Our days vary, our trials change. Our service varies, too. Our lives are far from being monotonous—they are musical with many notes and tones. Our present state is like checkered work—or, say, as a mosaic of many colors. But the strength that God gives varies with the occasion. He can bestow physical strength and mental strength and moral strength and spiritual strength. He gives strength just where the strength is needed and of that peculiar kind which the trial demands. We have no need to fear because we feel weak in a certain direction—if we need strength in that special quarter, the strength will come there.

“But if I am tried,” says one, “in a certain way, I shall fail.” No, you will not. “As your days, so shall your strength be.” “I am horrified,” says one, “at the thought of having to pass through the ordeal of a surgical operation.” Do not be horrified at it. For though at the present moment you may

be quite unfit for the trial, you will be quite ready for it when it comes. Have you ever been in great danger and found yourself cool and calm beyond anything you could have expected? It has been so with me, and I have learned from my experience not to measure what I shall be in a trying hour, by what I happen to be just now. The Lord will take care to fit us for our future and as our days, so shall our strength be.

I find that some persons read this passage thus—"When our days grow many and we come to the end, yet our strength shall be equal to what it was in the days of our youth. We shall, according to this, find our strength continuing as our days continue." It is a cheering meaning, certainly. The children of God do find that, spiritually, their strength is renewed day by day. The outer man decays, that is nature—but the inward man is renewed day by day, that is Divine Grace. As your days are, so shall your strength continue to be. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary and the young men shall utterly fail: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

Though days come one after another, so shall strength come with them. There shall be such a continuity of perpetual renewal that the heart shall be strong even to the end of life and the old man shall know no *inward* decay. An hour or so ago, I stood by what will certainly be the deathbed of one of our best friends and I was cheered and comforted when I heard him so blessedly speaking both of the present with its pain and of the future with its near descent into the valley of death. He said, "I have no doubt as to my eternal bliss. I have had no doubt—no, not a shadow of doubt—of my interest in Christ through my long illness. In fact, I have felt a perfect rest of mind about it all. And," he added, "this is nothing more than ought to be with us who listen to the glorious Gospel, for we live on good spiritual meat.

"Sound doctrine should make us strong in the Lord. I have not been a hearer of yours for thirty years and heard of Covenant love and faithfulness, to die with a trembling hope. I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." Thus, dear Friends, shall we also be supported, for the Brother of whom I speak is a simple-minded man who makes no pretensions to learning but is one of our own selves. It will be a great privilege to find that when death's days come—the days of sickness and decline and weakness—yet still our strength remains the same. It will be glorious to go from strength to strength and even in the day of utter physical prostration to find the spirit leaping for joy in anticipation of the time when it shall be free from the cumbering clay and shall stretch its wings and fly aloft to yonder world of joy. Yes, as our days our strength shall be.

Come, child of God, be peaceful, be happy in the prospect of the future. Do more, be joyous and show your joy. You are out of harm's reach, for Christ has you in His hand. You shall never be staggered nor overcome, for the Lord is your strength and your song and He has become your salvation. This text is a royal banquet for you. Here are fat things full of marrow. Eat abundantly, O Beloved. Feel your spirit renewed by the Holy Spirit. Be prepared for whatever is yet to come. For such a word as this,

not from me, but from the Lord Himself, may gird up your loins for another march towards Canaan—"Your shoes shall be iron and brass and as your days, so shall your strength be."

I am sorry, very sorry, for those among you who have no portion and lot in such a promise as this. Whatever you may have in this world, you are very poor in losing such a promise as this. You are shoeless, or if you have some wooden shoe, it will soon be worn out. You will never be able to travel to Heaven in any shoes that mortal men can make for you. You need to go to the great Father, who alone can say, "Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet." I am sorry for you in your present condition, for you have no strength but your own, and that is a poor piece of weakness.

You are troubled even now—what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? The common footmen of daily life have wearied you—what will you do when you have to contend with horses? O Souls, what will you do when you are ushered into the presence of the dreaded mysteries of another world? O Sirs, you are without strength. But is not that a grand verse, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"? Ungodly as you are, clutch at such a word as that. "Without strength" as you are, yet lay hold upon the Lord's strength!

It is for those who have no strength that Christ came into the world. It is for the ungodly that He laid down His life. Come and trust Him. Let Him become your strength and your righteousness from this time forth. And may He manifest Himself to you in a special and gracious way. And unto His name shall be praise, forever and ever. Amen.

Portion Of Scripture Read Before Sermon—Psalm 37.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—686, 89 (PART II), 46 (VERSE 1)

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

BELOVED READERS—To you, one and all, may the New Year be fruitful of blessings. I wish you the text of this sermon as a benediction, so far as it is applicable to you. Specially may your feet be shod with the iron and brass which are promised you and this will be better than the glass slippers of fortune, or the silver sandals of wealth. For myself, I beg your kind remembrance when you have the ear of "the King." I need restored strength, for I am well, but weak. And for another year of service I need that the right hand of the Lord may be laid upon me and that He should say to me, "Be strong—fear not." He that has supplied might to our feebleness for so many years will not fail us now. Week by week the loaf will be set before you in this sermon and we shall together bless the Lord of the Feast.

With all the good wishes of the season, in sincerity and Truth,
I am, your weekly visitor,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, January 1st, 1889.

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

“AS YOUR DAYS, SO SHALL YOUR STRENGTH BE”

NO. 210

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 22, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“As your days, so shall your strength be.”
Deuteronomy 33:25.*

BELOVED, it seems a sad thing that every day must die and be followed by a night. We have seen the hills clad with verdure to their summit and the seas laving their base with a silver glory. We have stretched our eyes faraway and have seen the widening prospect full of loveliness and beauty and we have felt sad that the sunlight should ever set upon such a scene and that so much beauty should be shrouded in the oblivion of darkness. But how much reason have we to bless God for nights! If it were not for nights how much of beauty ever would be discovered?

Never should I have considered the heavens the work of Your fingers, O my God, if You had not first covered the sun with a thick mantle of darkness—the moon and the stars which You have ordained, had never been bright in my eyes, if You had not hid the light of the sun and bid him retire within the curtains of the west. Night seems to be the great friend of the stars—they must be all unseen by eyes of men were they not set in the foil of darkness. It is even so with winter. We might feel sad that all the flowers of summer must die and all the fruits of autumn must be gathered into their storehouses, that every tree must be stripped and that all the fields must lose their fair flowers.

But were it not for winter we should never see the glistening crystals of the snow. We should never behold the beauteous festoons of the icicles that hang from the eaves. Much of God’s marvelous miracles of hoarfrost would be hidden from us if it were not for the cold chill of winter, which, when it robs us of one beauty, gives us another. It takes away the emerald of verdure, it gives us the diamond of ice—it casts from us the bright rubies of the flowers, it gives us the fair white ermine of snow. Well now, translate those two ideas and you will see why it is that even our sin—our lost and ruined estate—has been made the means, in the hand of God, of manifesting to us the excellencies of His Character.

My dear Friends, if you and I had been without trouble we never could have had such a promise as this given to us—“As your days, so shall your strength be.” It is our weakness that has made room for God to give us such a promise as this. Our sins make room for a Savior. Our frailties make room for the Holy Spirit to correct them. All our wanderings make

room for the Good Shepherd, that He may seek us and bring us back. We do not love nights, but we do love stars. We do not love weakness, but we do bless God for the promise that is to sustain us *in* our weakness. We do not admire winter, but we do admire the glittering snow. We must shudder at our own trembling weakness but we still bless God that we are weak because it makes room for the display of His own invincible strength in fulfilling such a promise as this.

In addressing you this morning, I shall first have to notice the *self-weakness which is implied in our text*. Secondly, I shall come to the *great promise* of the text. And then I shall try and draw one or two inferences from it before I conclude.

I. First, the SELF-WEAKNESS HINTED AT IN THE TEXT. To continue my metaphor, if this promise is like a star, you know there is no seeing the stars in the daytime when we stand here upon the upper land. We must go down a deep well and then we shall be able to discover them. Now, Beloved, as this is daytime with our hearts, it will be necessary for us to go down the deep well of old recollections of our past trials and troubles. We must first get a good idea of the great depth of our own weakness before we shall be able to behold the brightness of this rich and exceeding precious promise. A self-sufficient man can no more understand this promise than a coal heaver can understand Greek—he has never been in a position in which to understand it. He has never learned his own need of another’s strength and therefore he cannot possibly understand the value of a promise which consists in giving to us a strength beyond our own. Let us for a few minutes consider our own weakness.

You children of God, have you not proved your own weakness in the day of *duty*? The Lord has spoken to you and He has said, “Son of man, run and do such-and-such a thing which I bid you.” And you have gone to do it, but as you have been upon your way a sense of great responsibility has bowed you down and you have been ready to turn back even at the outset and to cry, “Send whomsoever you will send, but not me.” Reinforced by strength, you have gone to the duty but while performing it, you have at times felt your hands hanging exceeding heavy and you have had to look up many a time and cry, “O Lord, give me more strength, for without Your strength this work must be unaccomplished, I cannot perform it myself.”

And when the work has been done and you have looked back upon it, you have either been filled with amazement that it should have been done at all by so poor and weak a worm as yourself, or else you have been overcome with horror because you have been afraid the work was marred, like the vessel on the potter’s wheel, by reason of your own want of skillfulness. I confess in my own position I have a thousand causes to confess my own weakness every day. In preparing for the pulpit how often do we discover our weakness when a hundred texts exhibit themselves and we know not which to choose? And when we have selected our subject, dis-

tracting thoughts come in and when we would concentrate our minds upon some holy topic we find they are carried here and there, driven about like the minds of children by every wind of thought.

And when we bow our knees to seek the Lord's help before we preach how often does our tongue refuse to give utterance to the earnestness of our hearts? And alas, how frequently, too, is our heart cold when we are about to enter upon an occupation which requires the heart to be hot like a furnace and the lip to be burning like a live coal? Here in this pulpit I have often learned my weakness, when words have fled from me and thoughts have departed, too. And when that seal which I thought would have poured itself forth like a cataract has trickled forth in unwilling drops like a sullen stream, the source of which does almost fail and which seems itself as if it longed to be dried up and dead.

And after preaching, how have I cast myself upon my bed and tossed to and fro, groaning because I thought I had failed to deliver my message and had not preached my Master's Word as my Master would have me preach it! All of you, in your own callings, I dare say, have had enough to prove that. I do not believe a Christian man can examine himself without finding every day that weakness is proven even in the doing of his duty. Your shop, however small, will be enough to prove to you your weakness. Your business, however little, your cares, however light, your family, however small, will furnish you with enough proofs of the fact—“Without Me you can do nothing.” “He that abides in Me and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit—for without Me you can do nothing.”

But, Beloved, we prove our weakness perhaps more visibly when we come into the day of *suffering*. There it is that we are weak indeed. I have sat by the side of those who have been exceedingly sick and have marked their patience. But I do not know that I ever wondered at the patience of a sick man so much as I do when I am sick myself—then patience is an extraordinary virtue. Women suffer, and suffer well. But I think there are very few men who could bear the tithes of the suffering that many women endure, without exhibiting a hundred times as much impatience. Most of us who are gifted with strong constitutions and have but little of sickness, have to chasten ourselves that what little sickness we have to contend with is borne with so little resignation and with so much impatience. We are so ready to repine, so prepared to bow our heads and wish we were dead, because a little pain is rending our body.

Here it is that we prove our weakness, indeed. Ah, People of God, it is one thing to *talk* about the furnace. It is another thing to *be* in it. It is one thing to look at the doctor's knife, but quite another thing to feel it. You will find it one thing to sip the cup of medicine, but quite another thing to lie in bed a dreary week or month and to drink on and on and on of that nauseating draught. When you are on dry land most of you are good sailors—out at sea you are vast different. There is many a man who makes a wonderfully brave soldier till he gets into the battle and then he wishes

himself miles away and except his spurs there is no weapon he can use with much advantage. That man has never been sick who does not know his weakness, his want of patience and of endurance.

Again, Beloved, there is another thing which will very soon prove our weakness, if neither duty nor suffering will do it—namely, *progress*. You sit down tomorrow and you read the life of some eminent servant of God—perhaps the life of David Brainard and how he gave up his life for his Master in the wilderness. Or the heroic life of Henry Martin and how he sacrificed all for Christ. And as you read you say within yourself, “I will endeavor to be like this man. I will seek to have his faith, his self-denial, his love to never-dying souls.” Try and get them, Beloved, and you will soon find your own weakness.

I have sometimes thought I would try to have more faith but I have found it very hard to keep as much as I had. I have thought, “I will love my Savior more,” and it was right that I should strive to do so. But when I sought to love Him more I found that perhaps I was going backward instead of forward.

How often do we find out our weakness when God answers our prayers!—

***“I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith and love and every grace,
Might more of His salvation know
And seek more earnestly His face.
I hoped that in some favored hour
At once He’d answer my request,
And by His love’s constraining power,
Subdue my sins and give me rest.
Instead of this He made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart,
And let the angry power of Hell
Assault my soul in every part.
‘Lord why is this?’ I trembling cried
‘Will you pursue your worm to death?’
‘Tis in this way,’ the Lord replied,
‘I answer prayer for grace and faith.’”***

That is, the Lord helps us to grow downward when we are only thinking about growing upward. Let any of you try to grow in grace and seek to run the heavenly race and make a little progress and you will soon find, in such a slippery road as that which we have to travel, that it is very hard to go one step forward, though remarkably easy to go a great many steps backward.

If neither of these three things will prove your weakness, Christian, I will advise you to try another. See what you are in *temptation*. I have seen a tree in the forest that seemed to stand fast like a rock. I have stood beneath its wide-spreading branches and have sought to shake its trunk, to see if I could, but it stood immovable. The sun shone upon it and the rain descended and many a winter’s frost sprinkled its boughs with snow, but it still stood fast and firm. But one night there came a howling wind which

swept through the forest and the tree that seemed to stand so fast lay stretched along the ground, its gaunt arms which once were lifted up to Heaven lying hopelessly broken and the trunk snapped in two.

And so have I seen many a professor strong and mighty and nothing seemed to move him. But I have seen the wind of persecution and temptation come against him and I have heard him creak with murmuring and at last have seen him break in apostasy and he has lain along the ground a mournful specimen of what every man must become who makes not the Lord his strength and who relies not upon the Most High. “Ah,” says one, “I do not believe I could be tempted to sin.” My Friend, it depends upon what kind of temptation it should be. There are many of us who could not be tempted to drunkenness and others who could not be tempted to lust. If the devil should set before some of you cups of the richest wines that ever came from the vintages of Burgundy or of Xeres, you would not care for them—if you did but sip them it would suffice you.

It would be in vain to tempt you with the drunkard’s song. Nothing could induce you to lose your equilibrium by intoxicating liquors. But perhaps you are the very man whom a temptation of lust might overthrow. While there are other men whom neither lust nor wine can overcome who may be led by a prospect of profit into that which is dishonest. And others again, whom neither profit, nor lust, nor wine, would turn aside, may be overthrown by anger, or envy, or malice. We have all our tender points. When Thetis dipped Achilles in the Styx, you remember she held him by the heel. He was made invulnerable wherever the water touched him, but his heel, not being covered with the water, was vulnerable and there Paris shot his arrow and he died.

It is even so with us. We may think that we are covered with virtue till we are totally invulnerable, but we have a heel somewhere. There is a place where the arrow of the devil can make way—hence the absolute necessity of taking to ourselves “the *whole* armor of God,” so that there may not be a solitary joint in the harness that shall be unprotected against the arrows of the devil. Satan is very crafty. He knows the ins and outs of manhood. There is many an old castle that has stood against every attack, but at last some traitor from within has gone without and said “I know an old deserted passage, a subterranean back way that has not been used for many a day.

“In such and such a field you will see an opening. Clear away a heap of stones there and I will lead you down the passage—you will then come to an old door, of which I have the key and I can let you in. And so by a back way I can lead you into the very heart of the citadel, which you may then easily capture.” It is so with Satan. Man knows not himself so well as Satan knows him. There are back ways and subterranean passages into man’s heart which the devil does well understand. He who thinks that he is safe let him take heed lest he fall. That is not a bad hymn of Dr. Watts,

after all, where he tells us that Samson was very strong while he wore his hair, but—

**"Samson, when his hair was lost,
Met the Philistines to his cost:
Shook his vain limbs with vast surprise,
Made feeble fight and lost his eyes."**

The reason was because there was a back way into Samson's heart. The Philistines could not overcome him—"Heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of an ass, have I slain a thousand men." Come on, Philistines, he will rend you in pieces as he did the young lion. Bind him with green ropes and he will snap them in two. Weave his locks with a weaver's beam and he will carry away loom and all and go out like a giant refreshed with new wine. But, O Delilah, he has a back way to his heart. You have found it out and now you can overthrow him. Tremble, for you may yet be overcome! You are as weak as water if God shall leave you alone.

Now, I think if we have well surveyed these different points of our moral standing on earth, every child of God will be ready to confess that he is weak. I imagine there may be some of you ready to say, "Sir, I am nothing." Then I shall reply, "Ah, you are a young Christian." There will be others of you who will say, "Sir, I am less than nothing." And I shall say, "Ah, you are an *old* Christian." For the older Christians get, the less they become in their own esteem, the more they feel their own weakness and the more entirely they rely upon the strength of God.

II. Having thus dwelt upon the first point, we shall now come to the second—THE GREAT PROMISE—"As your days, so shall your strength be."

In the first place, this is a *well-guaranteed promise*. A promise is nothing unless I have good security that it shall be fulfilled. It is in vain for men to promise largely unless their fulfillment shall be as large as their promise—for the largeness of their promise is just the largeness of deception. But here every word of God is true. God has issued no more notes for the bank of Heaven than He can cash in an hour if He wills. There is enough bullion in the vaults of Omnipotence to pay off every bill that ever shall be drawn by the faith of man or the promises of God.

Now look at this one—"As your days, so shall your strength be." Beloved, God has a strong reserve with which to pay off this promise. For is He not Himself omnipotent, able to do all things? Believer, till you can drain dry the ocean of omnipotence, till you can break into pieces the towering mountains of almighty strength, you never need to fear! Until your enemy can stop the course of a whirlwind with a reed—till he can twist the hurricane from its path by a word of his puny lip—you need not think that the strength of man shall ever be able to overcome the strength which is in you, namely, the strength of God. While the earth's huge pillars stand, you have enough to make your faith firm. The same God who guides the stars in their courses, who directs the earth in its orbit, who feeds the burning furnace of the sun and keeps the stars perpetually

burning with their fires—the same God has promised to supply your strength. While He is able to do all these other things, think not that He shall be unable to fulfill his own promise.

Remember what He did in the days of old, in former generations? Remember how He spoke and it was done? How He commanded and it stood fast? Do you not see Him in the black eternity? When there was nothing but grim darkness, there He stood—the mighty Artificer—upon the anvil there He cast a hot mass of flame and hammering it with His own ponderous arm, each spark that flew from it made a world. There those sparks are glittering now, the offspring of the anvil of the eternal purposes and the hymn of His own majestic might. And shall He, that created the world, grow weary? Shall He fail? Shall He break His promises for want of strength? He hangs the world upon nothing. He fixed the pillars of Heaven in silver sockets of light and thereon He hung the golden lamps, the sun and the moon—and shall He that did all this be unable to support His children?

Shall He be unfaithful to His Word for want of power in His arm or strength in His will? Remember again, your God who has promised to be your strength, is the God who upholds all things by the power of His hand. Who feeds the ravens? Who supplies the lions? Does not He do it? And how? He opens His hand and supplies the want of every living thing. He has to do nothing more than simply to open His hand. Who is it that restrains the tempest? Does not He say that He rides upon the wings of the wind, that He makes the clouds His chariots and holds the water in the hollow of His hand? Shall He fail you? When He has put such a promise as this on record, shall you for a moment indulge the thought that He has out-promised Himself and gone beyond His power to fulfill?

Ah, no. Who was it that cut Rahab in pieces and wounded the dragon? Who divided the Red Sea and made the waters thereof stand upright as a heap? Who led the people through the wilderness? Who was it that did oust Pharaoh into the depths of the sea, his chosen captains also, in the depth of the Red Sea? Who rained fire and brimstone out of Heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah? Who chased out the Canaanite with the hornet and made a way of escape for His people, Israel? Who was it that brought them again from their captivity and did settle them again in their own land? Who is He that has put down kings, yes, and slew mighty kings, that He might make room for His people wherein they might dwell in a quiet habitation? Has not the Lord done it—and is His arm shortened that He cannot save? Or is His ear heavy that He cannot hear? O You who are my God and my strength, I can believe that this promise shall be fulfilled for the boundless reservoir of Your grace can never be exhausted and the unlimited storehouse of Your strength can never be emptied or rifled by the enemy. It is, then, a guaranteed promise.

But now I want you to notice it is a *limited* promise. “What?” says one, “Limited?” Why it says, ‘As your days, so shall your strength be.’ ” Yes, it

is limited. I know it is unlimited in our troubles, but still it is limited. First, it says our strength is to be as our *days* are. It does not say our strength is to be as our *desires* are. Oh, how often have we thought, “How I wish I were as strong as So-and-So”—one who had a great deal of faith. Ah, but then you would have rather more faith than you wanted and what would be the good of that? It would be like the manna the children of Israel had—if they did not eat it in the day it bred worms and stank.

“Still,” says one, “If I had faith like So-and-So, I think I should do wonders.” Yes, but *you* would get the glory of them. That is why God does not let you have the faith, because He does not want you to do *wonders*. That is reserved for *God*, not for you—“*He only* does wondrous things.” Once more, it does not say our strength shall be as our *fears*. God often leaves us to shift alone with our fears—never with our troubles. Many of God’s people have a factory at the back of their houses in which they manufacture troubles. And home-made troubles, like other home-made things, last a very long while and generally fit very comfortably. Troubles of God’s sending are always suitable—the right sort for our backs. But those that *we* make are of the wrong sort and they always last us longer than God’s.

I have known an old lady to sit and fret because she believed she should die in a workhouse and she wanted God to give her grace accordingly. But what would have been the good of that? Because the Lord meant that she should die in her own quiet bedroom? I have heard of and known men who, being sick, believed they were dying and wanted grace to die complacently. But God would not give it because He intended them to live and why should He give them dying grace till they came to die? And we have known others who said they wanted grace to endure many troubles which they expected to come upon them. They were going to fail in a fortnight or so, but they did not fail and it was no wonder they had not grace given to carry them through it, because they did not require it.

The promise is, “As your days, so shall your strength be.” “When your vessel gets empty then will I fill it. I will not give you any extra, over and above. When you are weak then I will make you strong. But I will not give you any extra strength to lay by—strength enough to bear your sufferings and to do your duty. But no strength to play at matches with your Brothers and Sisters in order to get the glory to yourselves.” Oh, if we had strength according to our wishes we should soon all of us be like Jeshurun—wax fat and begin to kick against the Most High.

Then again, there is another limit. It says “As your *days* so shall your strength be.” It does not say, “as your *weeks*,” or “*months*,” but “as your *days*.” You are not going to have Monday’s grace given you on a Sunday, nor Tuesday’s grace on a Monday. You shall have Monday’s grace given you on Monday morning as soon as you rise and want it. You shall not have it given you on Saturday night. You shall have it “day by day”—no more than you want, no less than you want. I do not believe God’s people are to be trusted with a week’s grace all at once. They are like many of our

London workman—they get their wages on Saturday night and then the rascals go and have Saint Monday and Saint Tuesday and never do a stroke of work till Wednesday, when they go to the pawnbrokers with their tools to help them over till the next Saturday night.

Now, I think God’s children would do the same. If they had grace given them on Saturday to last them all through the week, I question whether Satan would not get a good deal of it—whether they would not be pawning some of their old evidences before the week was out, in order to live upon them—spending all their grace on Monday and Tuesday. Spending very much of their strength in indulging in pride and boasting, instead of walking humbly with their God. No, “as your *days* so shall your strength be.”

Now, having said that the promise is limited, perhaps I am bound to add—what an *extensive* promise this is! “As your days, so shall your strength be.” Some days are very little things—in our pocket book we have very little to put down—for there was nothing done of any importance. But some days are very big days. Ah, I have known a big day—a day of great duties, when great things had to be done for God—too great, it seemed, for one man to do. And when great duty was but half done there came great trouble, such as my poor heart had never felt before.

Oh, what a great day it was! There was a night of lamentation in this place and the cry of weeping and of mourning and of death! Ah, but blessed be God’s name, though the day was big with tempest and though it swelled with horror, yet as that day was so was God’s strength. Look at poor Job. What a great day he had once! “Master,” says one, “The oxen were plowing and the asses feeding beside them and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away.” In comes another and he says, “The fire of God has fallen on the sheep.” “Oh,” says another “The Chaldeans have fallen upon the camels and taken them away and I, only I, am left to tell you.” Still, you see, grace kept growing with the day. Still strength grew as the trouble grew. At last comes the black stroke—“A great wind came from the wilderness and smote the house where your sons and daughters were feasting and they are dead and I, only I, am left to tell you.”

Grace still kept growing and at last the grace did overflow the trouble and the poor old Patriarch cried, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Ah, Job, that was a big day, indeed! And it was big grace that went with that big day. Satan sometimes blows up our days with his black breath till they grow to such a cursed height that we know not how great the days must be. Our head whirls at the thought of passing through such a sea of trouble in so short a space of time. But oh, how sweet it is to think that the bed of grace is never shorter than a man can stretch himself upon it. Nor is the covering of Almighty love ever shorter than that it may cover us.

We never need be afraid. If our troubles should become high as mountains, God’s grace would become like Noah’s flood—it would go twenty cubits higher till the mountains were covered. If God should send to you and

to me a day such as there was none like it, neither should be any more, he would send us strength such as there was none like it, neither should there be any more. Do you see Martin Luther riding into Worms? There is a solitary monk going before a great council—he knows they will burn him—did not they burn John Huss and Jerome of Prague? Both those men had a safe conduct and it was violated and they were put to death by Papists who said that no faith was to be kept with heretics.

Luther placed very little reliance on his safe conduct. And you would have expected as he rode into Worms that he would have a dejected countenance. Not so. No sooner does he catch sight of Worms, than someone advises him not to go into the city. Said he, “If there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses, I would enter.” And he does ride in. He goes to the inn and eats his bread and drinks his beer, as complacently as if he were at his own fireside. And then he goes quietly to bed. When summoned before the council and asked to retract his opinion, he does not want time to consider, or debate about it. But he says, “These things that I have written are the Truth of God and by them will I stand till I die. So help me God!”

The whole assembly trembles, but there is not a flush upon the cheek of the brave monk, nor do his knees knock together. He is in the midst of armed men and those that seek his blood. There sit fierce cardinals and bloodthirsty bishops and the Pope’s legate, like spiders longing to suck his blood. He cares for none of them. He walks away and is confident that “God is his refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” “Ah, but,” you say, “I could not do that.” Yes you could, if God called you to it. Any child of God can do what any other child of God has done, if God gives him the strength. You could not do what you are doing even now, without God’s strength. But you could do ten thousand times more, if He should be pressed to fill you with His might. What an expansive promise this is!

Once more, what a *varying* promise it is! I do not mean that the promise varies but adapts itself to all *our* changes. “As your days, so shall your strength be.” Here is a fine sunshiny morning—all the world is laughing—everything looks glad. The birds are singing, the trees seem to be all alive with music. “My strength shall be as my day is,” says the pilgrim. Ah, Pilgrim, there is a little black cloud gathering. Soon it increases. The flash of lightning wounds the Heaven and it begins to bleed in showers. Pilgrim, “As your days, so shall your strength be.” The birds have done singing and the world has done laughing. But “as your days, so shall your strength be.”

Now the dark night comes on and another day approaches—a day of tempest and whirlwind and storm. Do you tremble, Pilgrim?—“As your days, so shall your strength be.” “But there are robbers in the wood.” “As your days, so shall your strength be.” “But there are lions which shall devour me.” “As your days, so shall your strength be.” “But there are rivers—how shall I swim them?” Here is a boat to carry you over. “As your

days, so shall your strength be." "But there are fires—how shall I pass through them?" Here is the garment that will protect you. "As your days so shall your strength be." "But there are arrows that fly by day." Here is your shield. "As your days so shall your strength be." "But there is the pestilence that walks in darkness." Here is your antidote. "As your days so shall your strength be."

Wherever you may be and whatever trouble awaits you, "As your days, so shall your strength be." Children of God, cannot you say that this has been true till now? *I* can. It might seem egotistical if I were to talk of the evidence I have received of this during the past week, but nevertheless I cannot help recording my praise to God. I left this pulpit last Sunday as sick as any man ever left the pulpit and I left this country, too, as ill as I could be. But no sooner had I set my foot upon the other shore, where I was to preach the Gospel, than my strength entirely returned to me! I had no sooner buckled on the harness to go forth and fight my Master's battle than every ache and pain was gone and all my sickness fled. And as my day was, so certainly was my strength. I believe if I were lying upon a dying couch, if God called me to preach in America and I had but faith to be carried down to the boat, I should have strength given me, though I seemed to be dying, to minister as the Lord had appointed me. And so would each of you, wherever you might be, find that as your day was, so your strength should be.

And, in conclusion, what a *long* promise this is! You may live till you are ever so old, but this promise will outlive you. When you come into the depths of the river Jordan, "as your days, so shall your strength be." You shall have confidence to face the last grim tyrant and grace to smile even in the jaws of the grave. And when you shall rise again in the terrible morning of the resurrection, "as your days, so shall your strength be." Though the earth be reeling with dismay you shall know no fear. Though the heavens are tottering with confusion you shall know no trouble. "As your days, so shall your strength be." And when you shall see God face to face, though your weakness were enough to make you die, you shall have strength to bear the beatific vision. You shall see Him face to face and you shall live. You shall lie in the bosom of your God. Immortalized and made full of strength, you shall be able to bear even the brightness of the Most High.

III. What INFERENCE shall I draw except this? Children of the living God, be rid of your doubts, be rid of your troubles and your fears. Young Christians, do not be afraid to set forward on the heavenly race. You bashful Christians, that, like Nicodemus, are ashamed to come out and make an open profession, don't be afraid, "As your day is, so shall your strength be." Why need you fear? You are afraid of disgracing your profession, you shall not. Your day shall never be more troublesome, or more full of temptation, than your strength shall be full of deliverance.

And as for you that have not God to be yours, I must draw one inference for you. Your strength is decaying. You are growing old and your old age will not be like your youth. You have strength—strength which you prostitute to the cause of Satan, which you misuse in the service of the devil. When you grow old, as you will do—unless your wickedness shall bring you to an early grave—they that look out of the windows must be darkened and the grasshopper must be a burden to you. And your strength shall not be as your day. And when you come to die, as die you must, then you shall have no strength to die with. You must die alone. You must hear yonder iron gates creak on their hinges and no guardian angel to comfort you as you go through the dreary vault. And you must stand at God’s great bar at the day of resurrection and no one to strengthen you there. How will your cheek blanch with terror! How will your soul be affrighted with horror when you shall hear it said, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

You have no such promise as this to cheer you onward, but you have this to drive you to despair. Your days shall become heavier, but your strength shall become lighter. Your sorrows shall be multiplied and your joys shall be diminished. Your days shall shorten and your nights shall lengthen. Your summers shall become dimmer and your winters shall become blacker. All your hopes shall die and your fears shall live. You shall reap the harvest of your sins in the dreadful vintage of eternal wrath.

May God give us all grace, so that when days and years are past, we all may meet in Heaven. There are some people here that I have seen a great many times and I thought they would have been converted before now. I ask them one question, (there are some of them whom I sincerely respect), and it is this—what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? When death shall get hold upon you, what, what will you do then? May God help you to answer and prepare to meet Him!

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ISRAEL'S GOD AND GOD'S ISRAEL

NO. 803

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 29, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon
the Heaven in your help, and in His excellency on the sky.
The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are
the everlasting arms: and He shall
thrust out the enemy from before you;
and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone:
the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine;
also His heavens shall drop down dew.”*
Deuteronomy 33:26-28.

MOSES lived to be 120 years of age, and his life was divided into three periods of 40 years. The first 40 he spent as the son of Pharaoh's daughter in the Courts of Egypt. The second in the wilderness, at the foot of Horeb, as a shepherd, and the third 40 he reigned as king in Jeshurun, leading the Lord's people from Egypt to the borders of the promised land. Observe how each of these periods terminated. The time of his apprenticeship in Egypt concluded with his refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, his avowal of brotherhood with the afflicted Israelites, his attempt to avenge their wrongs and his consequent flight from Egypt, because of the king.

Brethren, it is to be desired that thus our original connection with the world may once and for all be snapped—we are not *of* it though we are *in* it—and may Divine Grace so work in us that, like Moses, we may count the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt, and, therefore, may flee from all worldly conformity, resolving to come out from among the ungodly, not touching the unclean thing, but separating ourselves, cost what it may, from the world which lies in the Wicked One. It will be well for us, if that which divides us from the world shall be as clear, sharp, definite and impassable as that which cut off Moses from Egypt.

The second part of Moses' life was spent in the solitudes of Horeb and was concluded by a manifestation of God and a commission for service. He saw Jehovah in the burning bush—the bush burned with fire, but was not consumed—and he was bid to deliver the Lord's message to Pharaoh. Yes, and our times of quiet meditation are good for nothing if they do not end and culminate in bright discoveries of God and a call to heavenly labor. It is of little avail to be in the wilderness unless God is seen there. Meditation and retirement shall be but as barren fields unless they yield to us the harvest of communion with the Invisible and give us sheaves of blessing for our Brethren! You bookworms, you solitary students and men of meditation, think of this and pray that your meditations may so end likewise.

The third part of his life closed with the song which is now before us. The last 40 years were crowded with events and full of trials. He was greatly vexed with the unholy spirit of the people, yet, in meekness and

patience he endured with them and was tender as a nurse with her child. He led the people like a flock out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm in the midst of miracles and wonders. And, then, afterwards, for 40 years he conducted them as they went winding about through the wild desert.

A great man, indeed, was Moses in what he saw, and did, and said and suffered. His life was spent in unmeasured toil. From the day when he first went in unto Pharaoh till he climbed the steeps of Nebo, he must have been, night and day, incessantly engaged, and yet he finished his life-work with a song! Even thus let it be our prayer, that we, bearing the burden and heat of the day, may hear in our souls the voice, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter you into the joy of your Lord." And then may we, in our departing hours, pour out a stream of praise unto our God, blessing and magnifying the Most High who has worked our works in us, and made us, unworthy as we are, to be instruments fit for His use.

We shall now consider these words which compose the last stanzas of the song of Moses. May the Holy Spirit remarkably assist me because I am, this morning, so unusually unfit for ministering among you that the weakness of the creature will be painfully manifest. Both brain and voice are choked up, but the Holy One of Israel helps our infirmities!

I. Observe, in the first place, that Moses' song **MAGNIFIES ISRAEL'S GOD**. He declares, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the Heaven in your help, and in His excellency on the sky." The Lord is the great joy and the delightful portion of His people. In nothing were the tribes of Israel so favored as in having the true God to be their God. This was the great glory and the peculiar privilege of the chosen people—that the only living and Most High Jehovah had manifested Himself unto them and to their fathers—had taken them to be His people, and given Himself to be their God.

Truly, when Moses looked upon the gods of Egypt, a country so superstitious that the satirist wrote of them, "O happy nation, whose gods grow in their own gardens"—when he heard the wild mythology of their idolatry, he might well have said, "There is none among them all that is like unto the God of Jeshurun." Perhaps Moses had seen those vast catacombs of idolized animals which Egyptian discoverers have lately opened—where the crocodiles, cats, and birds which had been worshipped in life—were afterwards carefully consigned. Wise as Egypt professed to be, she preserved her dead gods in myriads.

Dead gods! Hear it and be amazed at the folly of humanity! Truly, the fancies of the most civilized nations have invented no deity comparable for a moment to the living God who made the heavens and the earth! The plagues of Egypt, as we have often been told, were all aimed against the gods of Egypt and there was not a single deity adored by Egyptians that could stand against the Most High God. The river which they adored became loathsome to them when it was turned into blood and yielded frogs in such abundance that the land stank. Their sacred insects swarmed till the very dust was full of horrible life and the land was corrupted. Vain were their soothsayers and their idols, for Jehovah laughed them to scorn!

Not only was Pharaoh put to the worst before Jehovah, but Egypt's gods were humbled. When all the chivalry of Egypt came to the Red Sea and descended into the space which God had cleared to make a highway

for His people—when the bounding billows leaped upon them, covered as they were with the emblems of their false deities, and bearing standards inscribed with idolatrous signs—there was a triumph over all the idol gods as well as over their votaries. Moses saw this, and therefore sang, “Who is like unto You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?”

Moses was often grieved when he saw the people of Israel going back in their thoughts to the foul idolatrous house of bondage, when he knew that they were ready at any time to make the image of Isis, the golden calf, and bow before it. He mourned that they harbored the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of their god, Remphan. He must have felt a holy horror that these images of mere demons, these pieces of gilded wood and carved stone should ever be objects of Israel's adoration. For what had they done? What could they *do*? They had eyes, but they could not see. They had hands, but they could not handle—feet, but they could not move! But the God of Jeshurun made the heavens and then, before their eyes, made the heavens to drop with manna! He made the earth, and for their supply made the flinty rocks to flow with rivers!

He it was who went before His people with a pillar of fire and cloud, made them victorious over all their enemies and promised to bring them into the promised land. “Well,” said the man who had seen all this, “There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun.” Brothers and Sisters, there is no fear that you or I shall worship any false god *literally* as Israel so basely did, yet there is still need to say, “Flee idolatry.” Among all the comforts which you now enjoy, and in which there is always the tendency for you to find idols, there is none like the God of Jeshurun! Your home, the place of your love, must always be dear to you. Your relatives and the children of God's gift must always be the fond objects of your affection—but remember John's words, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”

None of your dearest and most cherished loves are at all worthy to sit upon the throne of your heart—far down in the scale must they be placed when the God who gave them to you is brought into comparison. That broad bosom of your beloved husband beats fondly and faithfully—but when death lays it low, as before long it must—how wretched will be your condition if you have not an everlasting Comforter upon whose breast to lean! Those dear little sparkling eyes which are like stars in the Heaven of your social joy—if these are the gods of your idolatry, how wretched will you be when their brightness is dim, and the mother's joy is moldering back to dust!

Happy is he who has an everlasting joy and an undying comfort—and there is none in this respect like unto the God of Jeshurun. There would be fewer broken hearts if hearts were more completely the Lord's. We should have no rebellious spirits if, when we had our joys, we used them lawfully and did not too much build our hopes upon them. All beneath the moon will wane. Everything on these shores ebbs and flows like the sea. Everything beneath the sun will be eclipsed. You will not find in time that which is only to be discovered in eternity, namely, an immutable and un-failing source of comfort. “There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun.”

Let me remind you that this is the case with all the objects of human pursuit. Some have lived for wealth, but when they have gained it they have been disappointed with the result. Though they have heaped gold in

the bag, and added house to house, and field to field, yet their aching spirit has craved still for food—for gold can no more feed a soul than dust can satisfy the hunger of the body. Some have followed the star of ambition—they would be famous and make unto themselves a name like the great men that are in the earth. And when they have gained the bubble reputation, they have wept to find that, “vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” Even the best of earthly joys pall upon the appetites of those who attain them.

Christian, stand to your God. Be it your life to live *for* Him that made you, to live *in* Him that bought you, to live *with* Him that chose you, to live *like* Him who lived and died for you. You shall find that such an object of life will satisfy all the powers and passions of your soul, for to this end your soul was formed and suited. You shall run in this race without weariness, and walk without fainting—and if you get the prize, it is one that shall not wither in your hand like the ivy wreath of Greece, or like the laurel crown of Rome. It will not decay upon your brow—for you shall win a crown of life that fades not away. Moses, in the particular words here used, seems to intimate that there is none like the God of Jeshurun as the ground of our confidence.

Now, you who have trusted in God, remember there is room for you to trust Him still more—and the more you shall confide in Him, the more emphatically will you declare, “There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun.” If we rely upon men we put trust in fickleness itself! Brethren, my own public life enables me to speak very plainly and positively here. If we trust in men, even the very best of men, either they may deceive us or else, good enough though their intentions may be, they will not be able to bear us up in times of great and serious difficulty. If we depend upon the generosity of our fellow men in carrying on the Lord's work—especially if we depend upon committees and upon the usual machinery which is so popular nowadays—we shall very often have to cry, “Woe is me!”

But if we trust in God, there may be famine over all the world but there shall be corn in Egypt for the Lord's people! And if every society that depends upon its subscribers goes to rack and ruin, we who depend upon the everlasting God will stand fast and firm! There are two kinds of policy adopted by the Christian Church nowadays—the one is to trust in man, and the other to trust in the living God—and I daily notice that where *man* is trusted to more and more, there comes the withering and the fading of the leaf. But where *God* is relied upon, that work becomes like a tree planted by the rivers of water, the leaf whereof does not wither and which brings forth its fruit in its season. And whatever it does is prosperous.

If I had to address any Christian minister today, I would say to him, “Let the very first point of all your Christian policy be to trust in the Lord, for cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm; but blessed is he that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.” I say the same to every one of you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ—place your reliance upon the Most High! Get a good leverage upon the Rock of Ages, for when you are firmly fixed there you may lift a world of difficulties and remove a mountain of troubles. Oh, to be clean delivered from every confidence which is not derived from the Covenant God of Israel! Brethren, however sharp the strokes that bring us down to this, they are blessed strokes! However bitter may be the medicines that rinse our mouths and

put them out of taste with worldly confidences—I say, however bitter they are—they are all the healthier and the Lord be thanked for them!

When we drink from the pure fountain at the fountainhead and turn from the stagnant puddles of the broken cisterns, cleaving to our God, and to our God alone, we are then growing in Divine Grace, and only then. That Moses meant this, I think is clear, from the words he uses, “There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, which rides upon the Heaven in your help [to help you], and in His excellency on the sky.” Men can come to our help, but they travel slowly, creeping along the earth. Lo, our God comes riding on the heavens!

They who travel on the earth may be stopped by enemies, they certainly will be hindered. But He that rides upon the heavens cannot be stayed nor even delayed. When Jehovah's excellency comes flying upon the sky on the wings of the wind, how gloriously are displayed the swiftness, the certainty, and the all-sufficiency of delivering Grace. God has ways to help us that we dream not of. “Your way, O God, is in the sea.” He has a way in the tempest, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. Jehovah has made for Himself a highway, a chariot road along the heavens, that His purposes of love may never be hindered. If we will but trust in God, invisible spirits shall fight for us! The great wheels of Providence shall revolve for our good, and God the Eternal, Himself, dressed in robes of war like a valiant champion, shall come forth to join us in our quarrel!

Fall back upon yourselves, lean upon your fellow creatures, trust upon earth-born confidences and you fall upon a rotten foundation that shall give way beneath you! But rest upon your God and upon your God, alone, and the stars in Heaven shall fight for you! Yes, the stars in their courses and things present and things to come, and heights, and depths, and all the creatures subservient to the will of the Omnipotent Creator shall work together for good to you, seeing that you love God and are depending upon His power. Thus, and thus sweetly, does Israel's Prophet sing of Israel's God.

II. The second note of the song is ISRAEL'S SAFETY. “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” Two sentences, with a little variation of expression, containing essentially the same sense. God is first said to be the refuge of His people, that is, when they have strength enough to fly to Him He protects them. But it is delightfully added, “underneath are the everlasting arms,” that is, when they have *not* strength enough to flee to Him, but faint where they stand, there are His arms ready to bear them up in their utmost extremity.

First, God is the refuge of His people—and He is this, let me remind you—always and under all difficulties. If it should rain today on your journey home, you will be glad of a little shelter beneath some friendly doorway. It would not have killed you, certainly, if you had not found the refuge, but still it was comfortable to be protected. Now remember that your God is not only a shelter from the avenging tempest at the last, but from the little present trials of the day. Do we not lose very much of comfort by our forgetting that God is as willing to help us in our *minor* sorrows as in our major griefs? He is your refuge, dear Friend, from a little loss, a little pain, a little grief—tell Him all.

As a father thinks nothing little that belongs to his well-loved child, so will your heavenly Father think no grief too little for His notice. He who

guides a sparrow and counts the hairs of your head will be a refuge for you in your daily griefs. But suppose a storm of thunder and lightning should come on today, and a perfect hurricane should blow—then some neighbor's house would be a shelter which you would value more—and so your God is a refuge to you when your heavier griefs come on. Do not, I pray you, think that anything in Providence can be too hard for God, or that your position ever can be beyond the reach of His delivering arm.

If you have lost all, so long as you have not lost Him, your losses shall turn out to be *gains*. If your friends and children should sicken and die, yet you are not alone so long as the ever-living Father is with you. It is a blessed thing to learn habitually to make use of God. There is no benefit in having a friend if we do not use him by making application to him. There are some friends who would love us all the less if we were often to avail ourselves of their friendship, but our God is such that He would have us draw upon Him. He delights to give—it is His pleasure to assist those who trust Him. Come, make your needs, your burdens known. Hesitate not, stand not away with an unholy bashfulness, but with a childlike boldness approach your heavenly Father and tell Him what your griefs may be, be they little or be they great—for the Lord is a refuge for us, a sure refuge, an open refuge, a constant refuge—a refuge at this very moment if we have but Divine Grace to fly to him.

Moses, I believe, in this passage alluded to one remarkable privilege of the children of Israel in the wilderness. All day long the cloudy pillar covered them. I do not think of it as being simply a column of smoke arising from the center of the Tabernacle—it was such, but besides that it covered the whole camp as a vast canopy or pavilion—so that in the great and terrible wilderness they fainted not under the burning heat of the sun. This pillar of cloud interposed a friendly shade so that they passed through the wilderness beneath the wings of God! At night their encampment would have been like a great city wrapped in darkness, but the pillar of fire supplied to them a light far superior to that which glows in London or in Paris through the art of man—that great flaming pillar lit up every tent and habitation so that in point of fact there was no night there.

They were always sheltered by God both by day and by night. If they strayed away from the camp for a little time in the heat of the sun, they had only to come flying back and there that emblem of the present God became their shelter! Or at night, if they wandered for awhile, that vast blazing lamp conducted them back again to their place of rest. So it is with us. In nights of trouble and grief, the fire of Divine comfort glows within us—the precious promises are round about us and we rejoice in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. And when by day we travel over this burning wilderness to the rest appointed, God interposes perpetually the sweet presence of His love to screen us from the sharper sorrows of the world that we may still, while walking onward to Heaven, behold the shield of Heaven uplifted above our heads.

Dwell, for only one second upon that word, “The eternal God is your refuge.” Brethren, God is not only our *refuge*, but He is such as the *eternal* God! I do not understand, my dear Brethren, how some of the very best of men are satisfied to believe that God will forsake His people. I thank God I cannot receive their teaching. I believe that He is my refuge today and He was my refuge in the days of my youth—and when this hair

is gray He will be my refuge, still. Yes, and when the sun of time has set beneath the horizon, never to rise again, and eternity is ushered in, the same refuge will remain to all His believing people! "The eternal God is your refuge."

What are you doing, my Brother, over there? What are you doing? You found God to be your refuge years ago when you were in great distress, and you are in some fresh trouble today, and you fancy God will not help you. He is the eternal God, man! If He had changed, if He had died, you might be in despair. But since He is *eternal* and *immutable*, surely He will do for you today what He did for you then. Cast your present burden upon Him who helped you in the burdens past. "The eternal God is your refuge." It is all very well for me to stand here and talk about this, but the sweetness lies in getting under the refuge! It is of no use to know, when you are climbing the storm-beaten Alps, that there is a refuge on the hill-side against the storm unless you get *into* it. Beloved Believer, get into your God this morning!

I will tell you what I have often had to do. I have had perplexities in the work which grows out of the Church, and I have mused over them and puzzled my brain till I could see no way of escape. And at last I have come to this conclusion—"It is beyond me altogether. Gracious God, take it in Your hands." I have put it upon the shelf and have resolved I would never think of it again—if *God* did not see to it, *I* would not. I gave up the case to Him, and I have often found that then the matter has been cleared up directly. Whereas, while I was fretting and worrying like a drowning man, I struggled myself deeper and deeper into the water—but when I laid quite still I could float and help came.

Do so with your troubles. When you have done the little you can do, then say, "This is evidently a thing beyond my power. What is the use of my straining at it? I am told God will appear for me in the time of my extremity, and so He shall. I will have nothing to do with it." "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

The second sentence is, "Underneath are the everlasting arms." This seems to anticipate that the child of God may be in such a condition that he cannot run *into* the refuge, but falls down in a fainting fit. And where does he fall? Into Hell? Ah, no, he is redeemed, and Hell can never enclose a redeemed soul! Where does he fall, then? Fall to the hard, unsympathizing earth, to lie without help till he is strong enough to recover himself? Not at all! Even when he falls, he falls into the everlasting arms! I will mention some times when a Christian needs these arms peculiarly. These are when he is in a state of great elevation of mind. Sometimes God takes His servants and puts them on the pinnacle of the temple. Satan does it sometimes—God does it too—puts His servants up on the very pinnacle where they are so full of joy that they scarcely know how to contain themselves! "Whether in the body or out of the body they cannot tell."

Well, now, suppose they should fall! It is so easy for a man, when full of ecstasy and rapture, to make a false step and slip. Ah, but in such moments, "underneath are the everlasting arms." They are safe enough! As safe as though they were in the valley of humiliation, for underneath are the arms of God. Sometimes He puts a man in such a position in service—there must be leaders in the Lord's Church, captains and mighty

men of war—and the Lord sometimes calls a man and says to him, “Now, be Moses to this people.” Such positions are fraught with temptation—and is God’s servant in greater danger than an ordinary Christian? Yes, he is, if left to himself—but he will not be left to himself, for God does not treat His captains as David treated Uriah, and put them in the forefront of the battle, to leave them, that they may be slain by the enemy. No, if our God calls a man to tread the high places of the field, that man shall say with Habakkuk, “He will make my feet like hinds’ feet, and He will make me to walk upon my high places.” “Underneath are the everlasting arms.”

Another period of great need is after extraordinary exaltations and enjoyments when it often happens that God’s servants are greatly depressed. I suppose some Brethren neither have much elevation or depression. I could almost wish to share their peaceful life, for I am much tossed up and down, and although my joy is greater than the most of men, my depression of spirit is such as few can have any idea of. This week has been in some respects the crowning week of my life, but it closed with a horror of great darkness of which I will say no more than this. I bless God that at my worst, underneath me I found the everlasting arms! What a grand day that was for Elijah when he saw the fire come down upon his bullock, in answer to his prayer, and he cried in holy wrath, “Take the prophets of Baal, let not one escape.”

I think I see the grim pleasure in the Prophet’s face as he saw them taken to the brook and slain. Behold his exhilaration as he binds up his loins and runs before Ahab’s chariot, keeping pace with the monarch’s horses with an agility in which soul and body joined. And then, what happens a day or two afterwards? In the wilderness, all alone, he has fled from a *woman’s* face, and you hear him cry, “Let me die, I am no better than my fathers.” Yes, the man who never was to die at all, prayed that he might die!

Just so, high exaltations involve deep depressions. But what was under Elijah when he fell down in that fainting fit under the juniper tree? Why, underneath were the everlasting arms! So shall it be with you who are called thus to fall into the depths of depression—the eternal arms shall be lower than you are! Brethren, there are many such occasions in which the spirit sinks sometimes through a sense of sin, through disappointments, through desertions of friends, through beholding the decay of the Lord’s work, through a lack of success in our ministry, or a thousand other mischiefs which may all cast us low. Yes, as low as Jonah, who went, he says, to the bottoms of the mountains. But when Jonah went to the lowest, underneath him were the everlasting arms! And when the earth, with her bars, was about him forever, and the weeds were wrapped about his head he came up again—because still lower than he was the hand of God—the everlasting arms were underneath him still.

There is blessed comfort when we come to die. I remember being at the funeral of one of our Brothers, and a dear friend in Christ offered prayer in which there was a sentence which struck me, “O Lord,” he said, “You have laid our friend low, but we thank You that he cannot go any lower, for underneath him are the everlasting arms.” Yes, underneath the bodies of the saints are the everlasting arms of God! They cannot sink to Hell—they must rise again at the sound of the archangel’s trumpet! Think, next time you go to the grave with your dear one—you will fancy that you are

putting the body into the cold earth to leave it there—but if you will think that there are God's arms at the bottom of that grave, you will drop your child into them, oh, so gently!

You will put father and mother, yes, and the dearest one you have, softly and happily down into the Father's arms, believing that He will raise them up again after a little sleep upon His bosom. You see here, then, the safety of God's people. God is such a help to them that they shall not faint—or fainting, shall only fall into His arms.

III. The second half of the verse tells us of ISRAEL'S FUTURE. "And He shall thrust out the enemy from before you; and shall say, Destroy them." You have seen a man in our streets with a telescope through which you may see Venus, or Saturn, or Jupiter. Now, if that gentleman, instead of revealing the stars, could fix up a telescope and undertake that everybody who looked through it should see his future life, I will be bound to say he would make his fortune very speedily for there is a great desire among us all to know something of the future! Yet we need not be so anxious, for the great outlines of the future are very well known already. We have it on the best authority that in the future as in the past, we shall meet with difficulties and contend with enemies.

My text, like the telescope, reveals to those who trust in God what will become of their difficulties and we see that they are to be overcome. God will work, and *you* will work. He shall thrust out your enemies, and He shall say to you, "Destroy them." What may be our future lot, as I have said, we do not know—save that the Holy Spirit testifies that in every place—bonds, and adversities, and struggles, and trials certainly await us. We shall not have an easy path to Heaven. As it has not been, so shall it not be, but onward—till we lay aside this body—we must contend for very life in spiritual things.

How precious it is to see that God has promised to thrust out the enemy from before us! This He does sometimes by Providence. Providence often removes enemies that would have been more than a match for us. When the children of Israel came to the promised land they found that the population had been thinned—God had sent the hornet before them. It was a land, as the spies said, that did eat up the inhabitants thereof—God had sent a hornet and a pestilence to clear off the hosts of Canaan. You do not know, Brothers and Sisters, how strangely God, by a very evident Providence, clears away temptations from before you—temptations which you might not have been strong enough to resist. You may be losing today something which will cause you grief for the present, which, if you had kept it, would have been your destruction in three years to come. The hornet has come and driven away your present comfort—really taking away from you a future *curse*.

Now, whatever your enemies or your difficulties may be, God is on your side and He will thrust them all away before you. It is a grand thing to go straight on in the path of duty, believing that God will clear the road. Like the priests, when they came to the edge of Jordan and saw the billows rolling up, yet on they went—and not so much as one of them was touched by the waves—as they put down their feet the waters receded! Oh, it must have been grand to be the first man in that march—to see the waters flow away before your feet! So shall it be with you! The water shall come up to where you are, yet it shall not touch you—you shall find it

disappear as you, by faith, advance. If you are called to march through floods and flames, they shall not hurt you, but shall work your lasting good and expedite you on your journey towards the promised inheritance.

God has promised, then, by His Providence to thrust out your enemies. He will also do it by His Grace. His Holy Spirit will give you Divine power by which every uprising sin shall be put down. If all the devils in Hell should tempt you at one time, and all the lusts of the flesh should rise against you in one moment, and all the pride of life should assail you at the same instant—yet the eternal God, the Comforter—would be able to put them all back and to deliver you, and to put a new song into your mouth as He gave you deliverance! Therefore, go on, Brothers and Sisters, even through the valley of the shadow of death—for God will thrust aside your foes and make a pathway for you. But not without *your fighting* will you win the victory, for He will say, “Destroy them.”

You are not to be taken to Heaven as though you were a corpse carried there on a litter—you are to struggle according to the struggling of the Spirit within you. You shall work because He works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure. Sins too hard for you today shall be destroyed tomorrow. You shall not merely escape from them, but you shall kill them! There are the eggs of the old serpent within your heart, and they continue to be hatched one after another—but you shall one day drive out the old dragon and all his hellish crew! Your heart shall be pure and holy—as pure as Heaven, and as holy as Christ Himself!

Thus much, then, with regard to God's people in the future—you and I can take comfort from the precious promise here contained.

IV. And now, lastly. Moses sang of ISRAEL'S BLESSEDNESS. Israel is to be blessed in three ways: First, “Israel then shall dwell in safety alone.” Brothers and Sisters, notwithstanding all our fights and our struggles by virtue of our salvation in Jesus, “We which have believed do enter into the rest,” for Jesus *is* our peace and our rest. Now see our privilege—we dwell alone. We have no alliance with the world. We stay not in Egypt—we rest not upon Assyria. God alone is our comfort and our confidence and we dwell in safety. Dwelling with God in communion—having with Him one object, one affection, one desire—we dwell apart from the rest of mankind, coming out daily more and more from them, and desiring to be nearer and nearer to Christ and further and further from men.

Here we dwell safely! There is nowhere safe except when alone with God, but always safe then. I would roll this precious morsel under my tongue, “Israel then shall dwell in safety alone.” Like a sparrow, weak and defenseless and on the housetop *alone*, but still in safety. Hunted by Satan, molested by inward corruptions, tempted by the world, slandered by cruel tongues—but in the bosom of Jesus Christ like a dove, alone, always secure! Perish? That you shall not! Be destroyed by the adversary? It must not be! In time and in eternity God's honor is pledged for your salvation! Earth's old pillars may bow, but the promises of God must stand fast!

Safe you are, and safe you shall be when the world is on a blaze. What a mine of comfort in two or three words! “Israel then shall dwell in safety alone.” It does not promise that you shall dwell in *wealth*, nor in *fame*, nor in *respectability*, nor even in *moderate* comfort—but you shall “dwell in safety alone.” You may have to lie upon the sick bed, bedridden year after year. You may be exiled from your native country. You may be among the

poorest and most despised of mankind, but you shall surely dwell in safety! Where God guarantees safety, there safety is. All the princes of this world cannot make that man safe against whom God aims His arrow, but all the devils in Hell cannot wound that man over whom the everlasting shield is uplifted to keep him secure—"He shall dwell in safety alone."

Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us take our harps from the willows and begin a tune of quiet joy, for we are safe! Ah, poor world, you know nothing about this. The legalist, standing upon Sinai's mountain, has done much—but he has more to do. He knows he is *not* safe—he is to be saved by his own good works, he says, and he never thinks that his good works have come to a sufficiency—therefore he is never safe. But *we* are safe, sinners as we are, for our righteousness is finished—it is the righteousness of Jesus! Our standing is secure for we are accepted in the Beloved. Blessed safety! This is what old Rome could never promise! Serve her faithfully, and she offers you but a place in "purgatory" as your reward! But we who have believed, have Christ today, and are safe today, and safe forever—

***"More happy, but not more secure
Are the glorified spirits in Heaven."***

Oh, it is blessed, going to sleep with this satisfaction, "If I never wake in this world, I shall wake in Heaven." And it is blessed, living in this world, on land and on sea, in the midst of storm or of plague, when one is sure that neither life nor death shall affect our safety. Having confided in God, as He manifests Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ, our everlasting safety is secured by the promised oath, the Covenant of the everlasting God.

The next blessing which is given to Israel is abundant provision. "The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine." God's people are to be supplied from a fountain, and around that fountain there shall always be a superabundance of corn for their necessities, and of wine for their comfort and their luxury. Those who come to God receive no stinted allowance—they are gentlemen commoners upon the bounty of God. There is a daily portion allotted to them and it is measured on a princely scale, equal to the dignity of the new birth. We drink from an ever-overflowing fountain. Other men get a little stock of grace, and goodness, and comfort, as they think, and they are pleased. But these things dry up and are gone!

But the Believer has no personal dependence whatever. He has everything in Christ—Christ is his fullness, and it pleases the Father that in Christ should all fullness dwell! The Believer comes to Jesus as to a fountain always bubbling up with waters fresh and sweet. The Believer's provision is of all kinds, to meet his necessities and to meet his more luxurious desires. Brethren, we are not only saved from Hell—that is like the corn, but we are made meet for Heaven—that is the wine. We are not merely saved day by day from our besetting sins—that is as the corn, but we are made to have enjoyments, high enjoyments, fellowship with Jesus, the sitting in the heavenly places with Him—this is the wine. Believe me, Brothers and Sisters, all that your souls can need, when your desires are stretched to the utmost, you will find in Christ Jesus!

If you have learned to trust Him, you may make your capacities of intellect as large as those of a Locke or Sir Isaac Newton—you may have a mind which knows no limit, which, like the horse-leech, cries, "Give, give!"

It may be as expansive as the all-embracing sky, but in your God you shall find all and more than all, for you shall be in your God as the fish that is in the sea, the bounds of which it cannot find, the limit of which it cannot learn—you shall be satiated, filled, satisfied with a superabundance from Him whose name is God All-Sufficient. Nor shall you merely have enough for your needs—your joys shall be high, bright, ecstatic! There shall be wine as well as corn.

Believe me, we have our dancing days, our times of sacred merriment—there are seasons with us when we would not envy the angels the mirth they have—when our Jesus, the Bridegroom, puts the fasting days away and gives us to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory! Oh, to know Him, to see Him, to feast upon Him is Heaven below! The fountain of Jacob, then, is upon a land of corn and wine to us.

Lastly, God's people are furnished with another unspeakable blessing, namely, celestial unction. "Also His heavens shall drop down dew." How we need this! How dry we get, how dull, how dead, unless the Lord visits us! The Oriental knew the value of dew. When he saw the green pastures turn brown and at last dry up till they were nothing but dust and powder, how he sought for the shower and the dew! And when it came, how thankful he was! When that dew of the Holy Spirit is gone from us, what dead prayers, what miserable songs, what wearisome preaching, what wretched hearing! Oh, there is death *everywhere* when the Holy Spirit is denied us! But we need not be without Him, for *He* is in the promise—"His Heaven shall drop down dew."

The words read as if there were much dew, superabundance of moisture. So, indeed, we may have the Holy Spirit most copiously if we have but faith enough to *believe* it and earnestness enough to *seek* it. Would God we had such a down-dropping of dew today! If it has not come this morning, as I fear it has not, may it yet descend on your classes and on your private meditations this afternoon! May you be favored with it this evening! O God, what are our services without Your Holy Spirit? It were better for us to be dumb than to speak without the Spirit of God! What is all the work the Church attempts without Your power, most blessed Holy Spirit? When we have You, then all is well—and You are promised—therefore come and glorify Yourself and glorify the Lord Jesus. Amen and Amen!

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UNDERNEATH

NO. 1413

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 12, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Underneath are the everlasting arms.”
Deuteronomy 33:27.*

GOD surrounds His children on all sides—they dwell in Him. The passage before us shows that the Lord is above, for we read, “There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the Heaven to help you, and in His excellency on the sky.” Assuredly He is around them, for, “The eternal God is your refuge.” And He is before them, for, “He shall thrust out the enemy from before you; and shall say, Destroy them.” Here, according to the text, the Lord is also *under* His saints, for, “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations,” and by You we are surrounded everywhere, as the earth is by the atmosphere—

*“Within Your circling power I stand.
On every side I find Your hand.
Awake, asleep, at home, abroad,
I am surrounded still with God.”*

The verse which contains our text should be interpreted somewhat after this fashion—“The eternal God is your dwelling place, or your rest, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” The parallel passage is that verse in the Song wherein the bride exclaims, “His left hand is under my head, and His right hand does embrace me.” The soul has come to its resting place in God and feels itself to be supported by the Divine strength. The heart has learned to abide in Christ Jesus to go no more out, but to lean on His bosom both day and night. It is somewhat in the condition of Noah's dove which, when weary, was about to drop into the destroying waters, but Noah put out his hand and plucked her to him into the ark. And when she was all safe, in the hollow of his hands, held by her preserver with a firm but tender grasp, she found in that place a refuge which surrounded her and upheld her from below. The hands covered her on all sides and came beneath her, too. Even thus, the hand of God sustains all those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I am going, however, to take the words just as they stand in our own authorized version and to consider them apart from the context. I ask your most careful consideration of them, for they must be very full of meaning and very emphatic in their force. The words are placed at the end of Moses' song and they are its crown and climax. He had wound himself up to the highest pitch of poetic excitement and spiritual fervor—and this passage is the result. He had spoken grandly, before, concerning the separate tribes and the words which fell from his lips are unspeakably rich. But now he is about to close and, therefore, he pours forth his loftiest strains and utters full and deep meanings—the ripest and choicest

fruit of a lifetime of communion with God! As our Lord ascended to Heaven blessing His disciples, so did His servant Moses, before climbing to Pisgah, pour out a torrent of benedictions, full and deep, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

It is not possible, therefore, that the language can be too greatly prized. The words mean all that we can make them mean! The nectar of their consolation is altogether inexhaustible! May God the Holy Spirit help us to weigh and measure them and then distil their inner sense and drink of the spiced wine of His pomegranate. “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” I shall handle the text in this fashion. Where? “Underneath.” What? “The everlasting arms.” When? They are underneath us now and always and if it is so, what then?

I. First let us attend to the question—WHERE? “Underneath.” Now, “underneath,” is a region into which we cannot see. We glance down and the dead cold earth stops our gaze. When we are heavy in spirit we fix our eyes upon the ground and look, and look, and look—but even an eagle’s glance cannot see far below. We scarcely can peer beneath the thin green sod—the bottom of a grave is well near the full range of mortal vision. The underworld is mysterious. We associate the subterranean with all that is dark and hidden and, because of this, it is often regarded as terrible. A man scarcely ever fears that which he can see in proportion to his dread of what he *cannot* see. Therefore, our alarm at the “underneath.”

What may be underneath us when we leave this sunlit region for the grave’s overshadowing vault? What will happen to us in eternity? Life will soon end—what is death? What is the immediate result of death? What shall we feel when we are traversing those unknown tracks and finding our way to the Judgment Seat of God? Not knowing except that little which has been revealed to us, we are all too apt to conjecture terrors and invent horrors—and so to begin trembling concerning that which we do not understand! What a comfort it is to be told by the Voice of Inspiration that, “Underneath are the everlasting arms!”

Poets have usually been in a gloomy humor when picturing the underworld. Imagination is very apt to spin a black and tangled thread. You have read of dark caverns where the bodies of men are fast detained, of which caverns Death has the key. Of this the grim Anglo-Saxon poet wailed the warning note—

***“Loathsome is that earth-house,
And grim within to dwell!
There you shall dwell,
And worms shall divide you!”***

You have heard of gloomy ruins where the night raven forever sits and croaks. You have heard of corridors where prisoners incessantly rattle their chains to the dolorous music of sullen groans and hollow moans. We have been afraid of death because of the horrors with which our ignorance has surrounded it! And we have been dismayed at the future because of the mysteries which darken it.

Be comforted! Our text, like a lamp, reveals the abyss of death and lifts up the veil of the future! Follow its gleam and you will see how it dispels the darkness! If you are a child of God, you may descend without fear into the lowest depths—even if, like Jonah, you had to cry, “I went down to the

bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me forever,” yet you need not be dismayed—for, “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” If you were called to take some such awful journey as Virgil and Dante have fabled in their poems, when their heroes descended into the dread Avernus, you need not tremble, though it were said of you as of them—

***“Along the illuminated shade
Darkening and lone their way they made.”***

If, I say, you were bound to traverse the sepulchral vaults and all the gloomy dungeons of Hades, yet you need not fear, for, “Underneath are the everlasting arms.”

Mystery of mysteries! Death, you are no longer terrible to us because the Light of lights is shining upon you! Depths unfathomable, we no longer fear to pass through you, for there is One whose love is deeper than the depths beneath as it is higher than the heights above! And He has said, “I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring them up from the depths of the sea.” We gladly take our journey downward at the call of God! And without fear we pass through the gates of the tomb and enter the doors of the shadow of death, for, “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” “Underneath”—the word awakens thought and enquiry. Everything ought to be sound, solid and substantial there. “Underneath” must be firm, for if that fails we fail, indeed!

We have been building and our eyes have been gladdened with the rising walk and with the towering pinnacles. But what if something should be rotten “underneath?” Great will be the fall then, if we have built as high as Heaven, if sand lies underneath, yielding and shifting in the day of flood. “Underneath” is the great matter to which the architect, if he is wise, will give his best attention. And truly, Brothers and Sisters, when you and I begin to examine our Graces and our professions, that word, “underneath,” suggests many a testing question. Is it all right with us as to the root of the matter—“underneath?” If not, the fair flower above ground will wither very speedily. The seed has sprung up hastily, but how is the soil underneath? For if there is no depth of earth, the scorching sun will soon dry up the superficial harvest.

“Underneath,” though it is mysterious, is also intensely important and, therefore, the great joy of being able to say by faith, “Yes, ‘underneath’ is well secured, we have trusted in God and we shall not be confused. We have relied upon the eternal promises and they cannot fail. We have rested on the infinite merits of the atoning Sacrifice of God’s dear Son and we shall never be ashamed of our hope.” Happy is he who rests upon the Everlasting Covenant ordered in all things and sure, for with him all is safe underneath! And, though the earth is removed and the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea, he need not fear, but may patiently hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God.

For a period we may be content with superficial pleasures, but there are times of trial when we have to fall back upon something deeper and more reliable—earthly props give way, in their season, and we need superior sustaining power. The carnal mind meets with an hour when “the proud helpers do stoop under him” and Believers, too, in proportion as they foolishly lean upon an arm of flesh, find their confidences departing.

Then it is that we feel the value of Divine upholding and rejoice that “Underneath are the everlasting arms.”

Let us look more closely into this most important matter. “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” That is, first, as the foundation of *everything*. If you go down, down, to discover the basement upon which all things rest, you come, before long, to “the everlasting arms.” The things which are seen are held up by the invisible God! This outward visible universe has no power to stand for a single instant if He does not keep it in being. By Him all things exist. There are no forces apart from God’s power! No existences apart from His will! He bears up the pillars of the universe. He, only, spreads out the heavens and treads upon the waves of the sea. He makes Arcturus, Orion, the Pleiades and the chambers of the south. Foolish are those philosophers who think that they can reach the essence and soul from which visible things were evolved unless they bow before the invisible God! He is the foundation of creation, the fountain and source of *being*, the root and basement of *existence*. “Underneath” *everything* “are the everlasting arms.”

Most true is this with regard to His Church. He chose her and redeemed her to Himself—the very idea of a Church is from the Lord alone. As a temple He devised her architecture, saying, “I will lay your foundations with sapphires.” And He has built up her every stone by His own power. He sustains her walls against her enemies so that the gates of Hell cannot prevail against her, for the foundation of God stands sure. The foundation of every true Church is the Lord Himself, the Highest, Himself, establishes her. God is in the midst of her—she shall not be moved. “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” Blessed be God, what is true of the Church as a corporate body is true of every *member* of the Church! There abides no spiritual life in the world which is not founded upon the everlasting arms.

Beloved, if the life of God is in you, if you search deep and go to the basis of it, you will find that your life is staying itself and drawing its constant nurture, yes, deriving its very *existence* from the life of the eternal God. Jesus says, “Because I live, you shall live also.” Your life is the life of God in you, for the Divine seed is the foundation of all spiritual life. Beware, then, of harboring in your heart anything which has not underneath it the everlasting arms. If there is any hope, let it be founded on the Everlasting Covenant of God. If there is any joy, let it well up from the everlasting love of God. If there is any confidence, let it be stayed upon the everlasting strength of Jehovah. If there is any service rendered, let it be according to the everlasting commandment.

If in your soul there is any Divine Grace. If there is any virtue. If there is any praise, suffer none of these matters to be superficial or pretentious—the creation of your own native strength—but let them all be founded upon the work of the Holy Spirit in your soul. In fact, let it be said of each of them, “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” Nothing will serve our turn in the trials of life, the terrors of death, or the solemnities of the Last Great Day, except that which has underneath it the everlasting arms! See how the nations reel when God no longer sustains them—“He removes the mountains and they know not, He overturns them in His an-

ger.” See how those Churches fly into apostasy which have not underneath them the everlasting arms—they are quenched as the fire of thorns and only a smoke remains!

Did not Jesus say, “Every plant that my Father has not planted shall be rooted up”? See how hypocritical professors disappear like the morning mist when the sun rises! Nothing will abide the day of the Lord’s coming unless its foundation is laid in the eternal God. The Lord help us to know what this means so that we may be like the wise man who dug deep and built his house upon a rock. Again, we may read the words, “Underneath are the everlasting arms,” in the sense of being the bottom and end and object of everything. If in faith you search into Divine Providence, however dark and trying it may appear, you will soon find that underneath it are the everlasting arms.

Satan may be mining, but God is undermining! Even under the deep devices of Hell the everlasting arms are to be found. Satan’s craft is deep to us, but it is very shallow to the Lord, whose wisdom goes far deeper than all the cunning of the Prince of Darkness. The evils and errors which are in the world should not cause us to despair of the ultimate victory of the Truth of God, for beneath them there is still the immutable decree of the Ever-living and the Ever-blessed—and that decree shall be accomplished, whoever may oppose it! Has He not said, “I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return. That unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear”?

His purpose shall stand. He will do all His pleasure. He works all things according to the counsel of His own will. Trace your present trials below their surface—trace them to the deeps, instead of groaning over their outward appearance—and you will find that underneath each trouble there is a faithful purpose and a kind intent. Yes, beneath the utmost depths of distress and grief, God is still at work in love to your soul! From seeming evil still educing good and, better still—and better still in infinite progression—underneath the best events are the arms of love to make them good and underneath the worst that can happen are the same everlasting arms to moderate and overrule them! As the design and object of all, “underneath are the everlasting arms.”

I take the text, “Underneath are the everlasting arms,” to mean, next, that the arms of God are there as the preservation of His people. His people sometimes appear to themselves to be in very great danger, but it is written, “He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone.” Certain of the saints are set in very high places and their brain might well be turned so that they would fall. But they shall not slip with their feet, for God upholds the righteous. If under deep depression of spirit and sore travail of heart their feet should be almost gone, what a blessing it is to think that “underneath are the everlasting arms.”

Sometimes faith walks upon a very slender thread high up above the ways of common men. Poising her balancing pole of experience, she tries to keep her feet—but her satisfaction is that even if she should slip for a while and her joy should fail, yet there is a net beneath her which will receive her in her fall so that she shall not be utterly dashed in pieces. “I

have prayed for you that your faith fail not” is the gracious safeguard of those who fall, as Peter did, when Satan has them in his sieve. The people of God must and shall be safe! Satan may cast them down, but God shall save them before they fall into Hell. Let us walk carefully, none the less, because of this. Let us watch well our footsteps as much as if our preservation entirely depended upon ourselves—but let us always look only to our Lord—knowing that He, alone, keeps the feet of His saints.

Holiness, strength of faith and ultimate perfection are the things which we must daily aim at, but it is a blessed consolation that when, through infirmity or carelessness, we do not fully maintain our consecrated walk, we are not, therefore, cast away forever, for it is written, “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholds him with His hand.” “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” That leads me to read my text in the fourth sense as teaching us that the everlasting arms are the *rest* of His people. If these everlasting arms are always outstretched to preserve me lest I totter in weakness and fall into destruction, then on those arms let me lean my whole weight for time and for eternity! That is the practical lesson of this choice word.

Keep yourselves, Beloved, in those arms which even now are embracing you! Why vex your heart when you may be free from care? Underneath everything, your Father’s arms are placed—what, then, can fret you? Why are you disquieted when you might dwell at ease and inherit the earth? Are you afraid to rest where the universe rests? Are not your Father’s arms a sufficient pillow for you? Do you think that it is not safe to be at peace when the love and might of God, like two strong arms, are stretched out to hold you up and the Divine Voice whispers to you “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him”? His own Word to His Prophets is, “Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem.” Will you not accept the comfort which He sends by His Spirit and bids His servants impart to you?

When God Himself does rest in His love will you not rest in it and shall it not, again, be proven that, “we that have believed do enter into rest”? Is not the Lord Jesus our peace? Why, then, are we troubled? Well may you lie down to sleep in peace when underneath you are the everlasting arms! Well may your spirit be filled with composure and become indifferent to outward trials when you are thus held up! Blow, you winds and toss, you waves, the boat cannot sink, or if it did sink it could not sink to our destruction—we should only drop into the great Father’s hands—for underneath even the sinking vessel are the everlasting arms! Now, let the earth reel with earthquakes or open wide her mouth to swallow us up quickly—we need not fear to descend into her dreariest gulf—since underneath us would still be the everlasting arms! What a fullness of rest this secures to the believing people of God!

I will fetch from the text one more meaning while I am speaking upon the position of these arms. The text seems to give us a promise of exaltation and uplifting. We may be very low and greatly cast down, but “underneath are the everlasting arms.” The merciful God is great at a dead lift. “He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His

people.” Who can tell how high a man may be lifted up—to what sublime elevations he may safely ascend when the Lord makes his feet like hind’s feet that he may stand upon His high places? If still underneath him are the everlasting arms he may safely obey the word, “Get up into the high mountains.” He may outsoar the eagle, mounting higher and higher till he has left the sun like a speck beneath his feet and still underneath him shall be the everlasting arms. Therefore higher and yet higher may we hourly ascend in thought, in joy, in holiness, in likeness to our God!

This is meant to encourage us to rise, since there can be no danger while the arms of God are underneath. This, then, my Brothers and Sisters, is where we may expect to find the strength and power of God—it is *underneath* us, bearing us up! We may not always see it, for the underneath is hidden from our sight, but surely as in secret the Lord upholds the huge columns of the universe so He bears up all His own servants and their concerns! “Underneath are the everlasting arms.”

II. Secondly let us meditate upon WHAT it is which is beneath us. The everlasting arms. What is meant by this? I hope the gentlemen who are so ingenious in toning down the word “everlasting” will not meddle with my text. A new way of reading the Bible has been invented in these highly enlightened days. I used to get on exceedingly well with the Book years ago, for it seemed clear and plain enough, but modern interpreters would puzzle us out of our wits and out of our souls, if they could, by their vile habit of giving new meanings to plain words! Thank God I keep to the old simple way—but I am informed that the inventors of the new *minimizing glasses* manage to read the big words small—and they have even read down the word, “everlasting,” into a little space of time! Everlasting may be six weeks or six months according to them. I use no such glasses! My eyes remain the same and “everlasting” is “everlasting” to me whether I read of everlasting life or everlasting punishment. If I clip the word in one place, I must do so in another. And it will never do to have a terminable Heaven. I cannot afford to give it up here when its meaning is joyous to the saint and, therefore, not there when its sound is terrible to the sinner!

What, then, are “the everlasting arms?” They are arms which *always* were and *always* will be. They are arms which always were strong and will never grow faint or weary. They are arms which, once outstretched, will never be drawn back again. They are arms which, once engaged for the defense of the chosen people, shall never cease to work for their good, world without end! Not failing arms, nor dying arms, but *everlasting* arms are underneath the saints of God! I understand the words to mean, first, the arms of everlasting purpose, “according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” His purpose may be called His arms, by which He stretches out His hands to do His work and these can never fail, for, “The Lord of Hosts has purposed and who shall disannul it? And His hand is stretched out and who shall turn it back?” “The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations.” “He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, even that He does.”

We have to deal with One whose gifts and calling are without repentance. In the Book of His purpose it is written and His Providence and

Grace shall tally with the secret decree, “He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion,” and the everlasting purpose of Sovereign Grace shall be carried out to the end. O my Soul, when your poor purposes shift and vanish and you have to change them 20 times a day, what a blessing it is to think that the purpose of your God stands fast, and He, Himself, is without the shadow of a turning! He has declared that He that believes in Christ shall be saved and so you shall be, though all Hell assail you! Come what may, the eternal purpose lies at the bottom of all, and will be the end and result of all, and so all Israel shall be saved, for, “underneath are the everlasting arms” of unchanging purpose.

But next we see here the everlasting arms of love. I do no violence to Scripture when I compare love to arms, for is it not written, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you”? Love has hands and arms with which it draws us and these are, at this moment underlying all the dealings of God with us. This love is everlasting love—without beginning, without variation, without end. Underneath you, child of God, is the infinite affection of the Omnipotent God—what, then, can harm you?

Your love? Ah, how it flames forth at times and then how dull it becomes! But your safety comes from a love which never varies, which many waters cannot quench and which the floods cannot drown. Look beneath you and you may see a depth of love, fathomless and eternal, which may well remind you of what Moses said when he spoke of “the deep which lies under.” The strength of love which abides in God, who is Love itself, no mind can conceive! All this is placed under you, O Believer, for your succor, support and security. Immovable arches of immortal Love sustain your soul from fear of ruin. Rest there and sing unto the Lord your song upon your stringed instrument as long as you have any being.

But next, these arms may be described as the arms of power. And what says Isaiah the Prophet? “Trust you in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength.” What said Jeremiah? “Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the Heaven and the earth by Your great power and stretched out arm and there is nothing too hard for You.” Strength is needed to uphold the people of God lest they fall to their confusion and that strength is always ready, no, it is always in *exercise*! Believer, you have been able to stand because the arm of Divine strength has never been withdrawn. He is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless and He will do it. “O bless our God, you people, and make the voice of His praise to be heard: which holds our soul in life, and suffers not our feet to be moved.” These are the arms of Immutability, for God abides forever the same. “I am God; I change not: therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

He saved His people “with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, for His mercy endures forever.” They are the arms of everlasting blessing, for God has determined to make His people happy and happy they shall be. “Surely,” He says, “in blessing I will bless you.” “Your blessing is upon Your people.” He gives liberally unto them and that liberality is never diminished, nor can it be stopped. Underneath you, Believer, are the ever-

lasting arms, forever carrying you as a nurse carries her child, forever gathering up for you innumerable blessings and carrying them for your provision. He shall gather the lambs with His arms and with those same arms will He show strength unto His people. How blest are they who have such arms beneath them!

I heard of a man who was spending a great deal of money, living in grand style and launching out in business. Certain of his fellow tradesmen told me that they could not see a reason for his cutting such a figure. But said one, "There is somebody at his back, we are quite sure of that." And so it is with us—we may well be strong, we may well be happy—for there is an unseen power which is at our back—the everlasting arms are underneath us—and we cannot fail! Let us be joyous, confident and praise the right hand of the Lord! Yes, though our conflicts should multiply, let us not fear, but let us sing unto the Lord, "Your right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power. The right hand of the Lord is exalted. The right hand of the Lord does valiantly." For this right hand upholds the cause of His servants.

III. Now, in the third place, let us consider WHEN the everlasting arms are underneath us. The only answer is now and for evermore. Now, at this moment, Beloved, the everlasting arms are underneath us! The life of a Christian is described as walking by faith and to my mind, walking by faith is the most extraordinary miracle ever beheld beneath the sun! Walking on the waves, as Peter did, is a type of the life of every Christian. I have sometimes likened it to ascending an invisible staircase far up into the clouds. You cannot see an inch in front of you, but you wind up towards the Light. When you look down, all is dark, and before you lies nothing visible but clouds. Beneath you yawns a fathomless abyss.

Yet we have climbed, some of us, for years up this perpetually ascending stairway, never seeing an inch before us. We have often paused almost in horror and asked in wonder, "What next? What next?" Yet what we thought was cloud has proved to be solid rock! Darkness has been light before us and slippery places have been safe. Every now and then, when the darkness has been denser than usual—a darkness which might be *felt*, when all the past behind us has vanished and nothing has been seen but the one step we stood on—we have said, "How did I get here? What a strange, mysterious life mine has been!" We have almost wished ourselves down on the level among the worldlings who can always see their way and know what is underneath them. But faith has come to our help, again—we have believed—and believing we have seen the invisible and grasped the eternal! And then we have gone on, have put our foot down again and soon have run up, with joy, the shining way!

What an ascent we have sometimes made upon that ladder of light so that we have companied with angels and left the world far down beneath our feet! Now and then we have enjoyed a glimpse through the thick darkness of the jeweled walls of the Eternal City which needs no candle, neither light of the sun. We have seen, I say, its brightness and determined, still, to climb the mysterious way. Well, Believer, at this moment, though you cannot see your way, yet since you are walking by faith, "underneath are the everlasting arms." It is so, though at this moment you

fear that you are going down into a gloomy glen. You have lost a great deal of money lately and the friend who so kindly helped you is taken away, so that you are going down in the world—yes, but underneath are the everlasting arms.

You are getting nearer to those arms now. Friends and wealth came between you and the almighty arms—but now you must lean only on them. The creature fails and you must rest on the Creator! You will have sweeter fellowship, now, than you ever had, since there is nothing to come between you and your Lord. “Ah,” says one, “but I am sinking in spirit. I am greatly depressed.” Still underneath are the everlasting arms. Your soul is sinking, like Peter in the waves, but a hand is outstretched to save you—you cannot sink while your heavenly Father’s hands are near. Go on sinking, if the Lord so wills it. Sometimes the greatest sweetness in life is found and intense bitterness. I never have in my soul a more solid and real joy than when I have been cast into the dust with fearful depression of spirit. I stay myself upon my God and Him, only, and then I touch the confines of bliss, though trembling all the while. I hardly know how to express the unrivalled sweetness of resting upon only the Lord!

When you are flung altogether upon God, then does your soul enter into the most Divine peace! The natural spirits have gone, everything that sprang from the vigor of youth and the natural elasticity of the mind has departed—now you come right upon God and lie naked in His hands. And then there is cast into your cup a foretaste of Heaven which the soul sits down and humbly sips to herself, for the secret she can never tell—no ear would understand her if she did. “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” And so, dear Friends, if you should sink both in circumstances and in spirits and your experience should happen to be a very downcast one, it will still be well. If now you have to discover the corruption of your nature, which you knew little of before. If now your experience, instead of being that of the Brethren of the higher life, should be one of humiliation, of prostration of spirit, of deep self-loathing—still, underneath you are the everlasting arms. If you are not to climb to Pisgah with Moses, but must dive to the bottom of the mountains like Jonah, still underneath are the everlasting arms—even at the lowest point of your going down! So it shall be forever and forever, for the arms are everlasting in their position as well as their power.

Now you have come to die. You have gathered up your feet in the bed. The death sweat stands upon your brow. You are sinking, so far as this life is concerned, among the sons of men, but underneath you shall then be the everlasting arms! Beautifully has Bunyan described confidence in death, when he pictures the pilgrims passing the river. Christian cried out to young Hopeful, “I sink in deep waters! The billows go over my head! All His waves go over me.” Then said Hopeful, “Be of good cheer, my Brother, I feel the bottom and it is good.” Thus, Beloved, shall it be with you! You shall feel the bottom of death’s chill river, but you shall say, “It is good,” for underneath are the everlasting arms!

Then comes the last plunge and we shall be as when a man stands on the edge of a precipice and leaps over into the clouds below him. You need not fear to take your last farewell and drop into your Father’s arms, for

underneath you shall be the everlasting arms! And oh, how sweetly shall you be caught up together with the Lord in the air, pressed to the bosom of the great Father and borne upward into the Heaven of heavens where you shall behold the face of the Well-Beloved and find yourselves entranced in His company forever and forever! O heir of Glory, underneath you there is no Hell! Underneath you there is no annihilation! Underneath you are the everlasting arms—therefore commit your spirit unto your faithful Creator and then welcome life or death, for all is well with you!

IV. Lastly, let us reply to the query, WHAT THEN? If underneath us are the everlasting arms, what then? First, let us look underneath. My Brothers and Sisters, you have been going on with great discomfort, sighing and crying because your way is rough and because sometimes you think it dangerous and fear that you will slip into a chasm and perish. Now, instead of complaining after this fashion, and fearing the road, stop a little and begin to examine—“What is underneath me? What is the bottom of my hope?”

You hypocrites dare not examine! You formalists dare not search! You are afraid to ask questions and to open your eyes lest you should see too much. But those who are honest and sincere in the way of our Lord are not afraid to be tested. You who are under any anxiety will do well to pull right up and say, “I have been troubled with doubts and fears and I will no longer endure it. I will know the end of this! I will search myself and know my ways and pray the Lord to let me see the worst of my case, for I long to know what there is underneath.” If you are believing in Jesus Christ with a sincere heart and resting in the atoning Sacrifice and the Covenant of which His blood is the seal, you can afford to search underneath—for you will find all things solid and eternal!

It is well to look underneath an outward Providence when it frowns darkly upon you, for it conceals the eternal purpose of love. The sorrows which you see are but, as it were, a napkin hiding the precious treasure of eternal Grace and, therefore, you can say to yourself in all ill weathers, “All is well, for all is well underneath! The eternal purpose is working out my lasting good.” Do not be afraid to search underneath, my trembling Brothers and Sisters. but when you do so and find the everlasting arms to be there, then sing unto the Lord with all your might!

The next inference is, if underneath us are the everlasting arms, let us lean heavily. We are afraid to lean too hard on God. To be careful not to encroach on a friend is a very proper disposition. Do not spoil a generous friend by drawing upon him so heavily that he will dread to see you again. I wish some people had a little more of that disposition, as far as I am concerned, but this is not a right feeling when you have to deal with the Lord! Never fear that you will weary your God! Never say to yourself, “I will ask as little as I can.” Why, He says, “Open your mouth wide and I will fill it!” Never say, “I will trust Him a little. I will take Him a part of my cares and rest a portion of my trials upon Him.” No, lean with your whole weight!

Do not keep a spare ounce for your own carrying—that will break your back! Bring all the tons and the pounds and the ounces and the penny-weights and cast them all on God! He loves His children to treat Him with

entire confidence. All your weight will not trouble Him. You know Aesop's fable of the polite little gnat which apologized to the ox for burdening him when he lighted on his horn, and the ox replied that he really did not know he was there. Your God will not tell you that, for He counts the very hairs of your head, but He will tell you that your load is no burden to Him. Why, if you had 50 kingdoms burdening your brain and if you carried the politics of a hundred nations in your mind, or were loaded with all the cares of a thousand worlds, you might safely leave them with the Wonderful Counselor and go your way rejoicing! Lean hard, Brothers and Sisters! For underneath you are the everlasting arms!

The next thing is, then, let us rise confidently. Do not be afraid of ascending to heights of love. Do not be afraid of having a high ambition for a wholly consecrated life. Be not afraid of high doctrines, or high enjoyments, or high attainments in holiness. Go as high as you like, for underneath you are the everlasting arms! It would be dangerous to speculate, but it is safe to believe. Some men are always going downward, turning diamonds into gas and hallelujahs into howls! They are trying to get rid of precious Truths of God and to substitute some new theories for them. Let us be brave in the other direction and seek to comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. You may climb, my dear young Brothers and Sisters, nor fear to fall even if you reach the masthead of Truth, for underneath are the everlasting arms!

Once more, let us dare unhesitatingly and be very courageous for the Lord our God—

***“Through floods or flames, if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where He goes”***

for underneath are the everlasting arms! Are you called upon to lose everything for Christ? Go on and leap like Curtius into the gulf for your Lord Jesus, for underneath you are the everlasting arms! Does your Master call you to an enterprise which seems impossible? Nevertheless, if God has called you to it, attempt it, for He renders to every man according to his work. Remember what the Negro said—“If Massa Jesus say to me, ‘Sam, you jump through that brick wall,’ I jump. It is Sam's business to jump—it is Massa's work to make me go through the wall.” So it is with you. It is yours to leap forward when the Captain gives the watchword—and in confidence to attempt what mere nature cannot achieve—for the *supernatural* is with us!

The best of all is, God is with us! Underneath us are the everlasting arms! Less reliance upon self and more reliance upon God! Less counting of the barley loaves and fishes—and a greater readiness to bring them to His hands who can multiply them till they shall feed the thousands—this is what we need! God grant us Grace to trust in His almighty power and sing from now on and forever, “underneath are the everlasting arms!”

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THE EVERLASTING ARMS

NO. 2435

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 20, 1895.

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“Underneath are the everlasting arms.”
Deuteronomy 33:27.

This short passage is found in the midst of a mass of gold—sentences containing the richest treasures of the Truth of God. All this spiritual wealth is the heritage of the people of God—not only of His typical people to whom these words were spoken, but to His real people, the true seed of Abraham, those who are the believing children of the Father of all Believers. If you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, you may take these precious words home to yourself—and you may live upon them—you may eat the fat, drink the sweet and rejoice in all the refreshment that they bring to your spirit!

In the four verses, from the 26th to the 29th, notice how near God is said to be to His people. He is described as being *above us*, arching us over with His Divine Power—“There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the Heavens to help you, and in His excellency on the clouds.” Faith can hear the tramp of the celestial cavalry above our heads! We who trust in the Lord are always safe, for the angels of God are looking down upon us from the battlements of Heaven, ready to show themselves strong on our behalf as soon as their presence is needed by us. Then, our text tells us of God *beneath us*. As He is above us in the heavens, so underneath us are the everlasting arms. The next sentence shows us God *before us*—“and He shall thrust out the enemy from before you; and shall say, Destroy them.” And the remaining verses of the chapter represent Him as being all *around us*, so that we are encompassed with God—not only with His Presence, with which He fills Heaven, earth and all deep places—but with the glorious Presence of His mighty love. He is above, beneath, before, and all around us! He never forsakes us, for in Him we live, move, and have our being. Let us rejoice, therefore, in our Lord's nearness!

I. Now, coming to our text, I want, as God's Spirit shall help me, to bring to your notice, first, THE QUARTER THAT IS THUS HONORABLY SECURED—Underneath.

“Underneath.” Well, in the first place, that is *the point of mysterious assault*. We look for the attacks of the powers of darkness from underneath. They are very remarkable attacks—there are many who are the objects of them, but there are few who fully understand them. There are many of God's children who are often sorely vexed by Satan, yet *they do not know that it is the devil who is troubling them*. They blame themselves for thoughts that are none of their own, but which come up from the in-

fernal Pit like smoke and sparks from that dread lower world. O Friends, if Satan has ever grievously tempted and assailed you, you will dread beyond expression any repetition of that temptation or assault! Mr. Bunyan well says that a man had better go over hedge and ditch—and many miles round about—rather than meet this terrible adversary! He not only works through the world and through the flesh, but he has modes of personal attack—fiery darts from his own hands—false accusations and foul insinuations which come only from him. By all these he assails Christians and brings us to a stand so that, sometimes, we know not what to do! Just underneath us there seems to yawn the awful Pit, out of which Satan rises with his abandoned fallen angels, to do us mischief.

Then comes in this gracious assurance—“Underneath are the everlasting arms.” Against this mysterious, because incomprehensible foe, whose darts are so painful and deadly, God has been pleased to set a shield. And He puts underneath you, O child of God, His everlasting arms! You may be tempted by Satan, but it shall only be in a measure—God will not let him put forth all his diabolical strength! When the Lord suffered Satan to tempt Job, there was always a proviso, which said to the devil as to the raging sea, “Hitherto shall you come, but no further.” The Lord pulled him up short just at the point where he hoped to destroy the good man—and it shall be so with you, also, tried Believer. Underneath you, in your worst attacks from Satan, shall be the everlasting arms of the Lord Himself!

Note a second meaning of this word, “underneath.” That is *the place of our daily pilgrimage*. To the Israelites, “underneath” was the burning sand of the terrible wilderness. Sometimes, “underneath,” were the fiery serpents and all manner of evil things, so that their march towards Canaan was a continual trial to them. “But,” says God to His people, “though sense sees nothing underneath but ever-burning sands, let *faith* see underneath the everlasting arms.” Some of you go forth to your daily labors and you find the place of your service to be a real wilderness, full of trial and everything that is unpleasant to you. Yet look again, with eyes touched with Heaven’s eye-salve and, instead of seeing the bitter poverty, and the grinding toil, and the daily trial, you will begin to see that God is in it all and, “underneath are the everlasting arms!” You shall go cheerfully home to Heaven, borne up by God. He who made you will carry you! He who loves you will bear you all the days of old till you shall come unto the Mountain of God and stand in your lot at the end of the days! I think, therefore, that our text applies not only to the point of mysterious assault, but to the place of daily pilgrimage and toil.

Do you not think that this word, “underneath,” also relates to *the place of perilous descent*? There are times in a man’s life when he has to come down. It is not a very easy matter to go down the hill safely. Some persons have proved that it is difficult to grow old gracefully, but to the Christian it ought not to be impossible or unusual to grow old graciously. Still, there are difficulties about that coming down the hill of life—coming down in a very material sense, perhaps, from competence to real poverty. Coming down as to your mental powers. Being conscious of losing your former influence over your fellows. Coming down in general repute, through no fault of your own, but through circumstances of which you

are not the master. All this is very trying to human nature. You know that on the way to Heaven there are many Hill Difficulties—and brave spirits rather enjoy climbing to the top of them! We like a craggy path, hard and rough, where we can keep on looking upward all the way even if we have to scramble on our hands and knees. There is something pleasant in going up in that fashion, but it is when going down into the Valley of Humiliation that we are apt to slip. We do not like going down and, as many horses fall at the bottom of the hill, so I believe that many people trip at the end of a trial when they think it is nearly over and they have no need to look so carefully to their feet.

Well now, dear Friends, if any of you are going down the hill, I think the text comes in very sweetly—“Underneath are the everlasting arms.” You cannot go so low but that God’s arms of love are still lower! You get poorer and poorer, but, “underneath are the everlasting arms.” You get older and feebler. Your ears are failing, your eyes are growing dim, but, “underneath are the everlasting arms.” By-and-by, unless the Lord speedily returns, you will have to die—and you will come down very low, then—but still it will be true, “underneath are the everlasting arms.”

Further, I think that we may use the text as referring to a *matter of intense concern*. Sometimes we say to one another, “Is our religion real? We trust we love the Lord, but do we *really* love Him? We think we are reposing in Christ, but are we *really* doing so? We have a measure of joy and peace—does it *really* come through believing in Jesus, or is it a delusion of the flesh or of the devil? We have, so far, come a long way in the heavenly trail, but are we really going towards Heaven, or is it all a mistake?”

It is a good thing, occasionally, Brothers and Sisters, to look underneath. He who never sees what is under him may have great cause to do so. Examine your foundations—see what your cornerstones are, for if you should be building on the sand, then, in the time of storm, your fine building will be all swept away! It is a grand thing if we can find this text to be true—“Underneath are the everlasting arms.” I dig through my experience and, “underneath are the everlasting arms.” I question my joys. I examine myself about my sorrows, but do I come down on the purposes of God, the Immutable faithfulness of the Most High, the eternal Truths of God revealed in Scripture? Do I come down upon the everlasting arms? If so, I am resting where the whole universe may rest—I am resting on a faithful God and I need not be afraid! Do not fear to examine yourself! If you do, there is, perhaps, all the graver need for the testing and trying. Search and look, and go to the bottom of these matters. Happy shall you be if, diving to the very depths, you can say, “Yes, underneath are the everlasting arms.”

I shall use this first word of my text in one more way. I think we have, here, *the secret of singular discoveries that will yet be made*. We do not at present know the reality of things—we judge according to our feelings and by the sight of our eyes—how else can we judge? But the day will come when things will appear very differently from what they do now. There is a huge trouble which has mastered us for years—it has seemed, with its dense shadow, to darken our heavenly way for a great length of time—but the day will come when we shall look through that trouble and we shall find that “underneath are the everlasting arms.” Perhaps some

of us are in sore perplexity. We cannot understand the Lord's Providential dealings with us. He does not always tell us the reason for His actions—we might not understand it if He did—but we may rest assured that He is working out purposes of Infinite Love! He ceases not to care for us even when things appear to be at their very worst. I bear my willing witness to the faithfulness of God! I am not as old as some, but I am old enough to have gone through fire and water, and I am here to testify that I have not been burned by the one, nor drowned by the other! Cannot many of you say the same? In your sorest trials and in your hottest furnaces, has He not been especially present with you and bestowed great blessings upon you? 'Tis even so! Then trust Him, you saints, for what His Word assures you is gloriously true—"Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Go deeper down. Look further into the real reason of things than you have been accustomed to do and you shall come on this solid foundation—that God is working out for you infinite and eternal blessedness by these light afflictions which are but for a moment.

II. Now, secondly, let us note THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS QUARTER IS SECURED—"Underneath are the everlasting arms."

The everlasting arms are there and that means, first of all, that *God Himself is close to us*, guaranteeing the eternal safety of all those who trust in Him. Of course, where any of his elect arms are, there He is, and God is not divided from His own arms. This is our joy and comfort that God is with us! What strength it gives to faith to believe that God is present! Even the false prophet, Mohammed, had a strong faith in god—in Allah—and when he fled for the first time and hid in a cave with only one friend, his companion said to him, "Our pursuers are after us and there are only two of us." "Stop," exclaimed Mohammed, "there are three, for Allah is here!" It was the utterance of a brave and grand faith—would that his whole career had been in harmony with it! Wherever there are two of God's people, there is *Another* with them, for God is there. We do not count Him in as we ought to do, yet, if we were wise, we would put ourselves down as only ciphers and say, "*Nobody* is there till HE is there! He is the one true, personal Numeral that multiplies all these ciphers indefinitely."

Mr. Wesley said, as he died, "The best of all is, God is with us." And that *is* the best of all, is it not? Underneath is God, Himself. He who made the heavens and the earth cannot forsake those who do not forsake Him. If you love Him. If you trust in Him, He might as soon *cease to be*, as fail anyone who is relying upon Him. This is the glory of Jehovah, that while the gods of the heathen are worthless idols, our God hears prayer and answers the cry of His people! Try Him and see if it is not so. Blessed are they who trust in Jehovah, for they shall find in the living God help in every time of need, and sufficient strength for every day of trial! So, then, we see that what might appear to us as the dark abyss, the dreary, mysterious underworld, is all guarded by Jehovah, Himself—"Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Our text also means that *the Lord's Immutable Purpose is being fulfilled*. Where God's arms are, He is at work, and He is at work accomplishing His purposes of Grace. The text speaks of everlasting arms—that

is a strength that never fails and never turns aside from the purpose to which it has bound itself. O child of God, down deep where you cannot see it, the Divine Power of the Eternal Godhead is always at work for you! The arms of God are busy on your behalf! He has made them bare to show Himself strong in your defense! You can be sure of this! God has a purpose of love to all who believe in Him—and that purpose of love shall stand fast to all eternity! Whatever changes there may be in the appearance of this world and in the great universe of which it forms a part, there shall be no change in the Infinite resolve of God to bless His people and preserve them to the end. Why, Believer, be of good comfort, and say to yourself, “At the bottom of everything that happens to me, there is the Immutable Purpose of God and God, Himself, working it out!”

Beside the Lord’s Immutable Purpose and His Infinite Power by which God is at work for you at all times, our text means that *His inexhaustible patience is waiting its time*. “Underneath are the everlasting arms” bearing up your load, sustaining it with long endurance while He keeps on working for you—invisible, yet always active on your behalf. Do you expect to see your God on this side Heaven? If so, you will be disappointed! Are you willing to walk by faith and not by sight? If so, you shall have a double blessing, for, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” Oh, that the Holy Spirit of God would bring you to this point! Having trusted God in the Person of His dear Son. Having laid the whole weight of your eternal interests upon Him whom God has revealed to be your Savior, you may leave them there in perfect safety, without a moment’s care or anxiety! God’s everlasting arms must carry out God’s eternal purposes. Not one of His promises can fall to the ground, for, “God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: has He said and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken and shall He not make it good?” It is *God Himself* who undertakes to bear you up, and bear you through—therefore rest assured that He will do it!

III. I must not speak longer upon that matter, for I must say just a little upon the third point. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THIS TEXT IS VERY PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS—“Underneath are the everlasting arms.”

One of these times is, I think, *when we are very sick and very feeble*. The pillows have been fluffed up for you and made as soft as they can be. And the bed, which is so apt to grow hard, has been tenderly smoothed by kind fingers, yet you sink back as if you were about to die of exhaustion! Sink back, then! Be not afraid, for, “underneath are the everlasting arms.” Perhaps there comes a faintness over you and you seem to be sinking, sinking—you know not where—still, “underneath are the everlasting arms!” You try to rise, but you cannot. You would clutch at something by which you think you might get back to activity, but you fall back into the same state of weary languor and pain. Well, but still, “underneath are the everlasting arms!” It is delightful to feel that our feebleness encroaches upon Omnipotence—that just when there is nothing left to us—then God comes in with all His fullness and bears us up! He is always faithful and full of compassion—He does not afflict willingly, or grieve the children of men—so, when He must grieve them, it is *then* that He displays His special power to strengthen and sustain them. Go home to your bed, if so it must be with you. If there are wearisome months of

sickness and disease awaiting you, go home and carry this text with you—"Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Is not this Word of God very sweet, too, *when burdened with sore troubles, or oppressed with heavy labors*? You feel that you need double strength and you say, "I cannot keep on any longer. There is too much for mortal powers to endure, I cannot bear up under these repeated trials. The last time I felt thus, I thought that I had no strength left, and now this feeling comes over me again—what shall I do? I am thrown down, I am crushed as though men were riding over my head! I seem to be cast out like the mire in the streets." Yes, but still, "underneath are the everlasting arms." We sang, just now—

"As your day, your strength shall be."

Is that truth or fiction? Ask God's people as to their past experience and they will set to their seal that God is true! And you, too, shall find it true. Oh, how wondrously God's saints have been borne up under persecution—and cheerful and glad under oppression! The sweetest songs that ever were heard on earth were sung behind prison bars! Perhaps I shall not be wrong when I say that the most wonderful joys that ever were felt by mortal hearts have been felt by men and women who, on the morrow, were to be burned at the stake—but whose very souls have danced within them because of the unspeakable delight which the Presence of God has given them!

I think it was Socrates who said, "Philosophers could be merry without music." I take the statement from his mouth and alter it, and say, Christians can be happy without happy circumstances! They can, sometimes, like nightingales, sing best in dark nights. Their joy is not mere outward mirth. Sorrows fall upon them, yet, from the deep that lies underneath wells up yet more exceeding joy! Yes, "underneath are the everlasting arms," and when we can no longer stand, it is a blessed thing to lean or fall back on them!

I have already told you that another time when this text is very sweet is *when you are going down hill*. And some of you may be going down hill pretty fast just now. Never mind—"Underneath are the everlasting arms." When you come down the hill of old age, you know what lies at the bottom. Why, then, go up again, higher than you ever went before, renewing your youth and being forever with the Well-Beloved!

So, dear Friends, I may change the application of my text, "Underneath are the everlasting arms," and pass it on to *those who are all trembling and shaking*. Some of you, perhaps, know what I mean. That young man has begun to preach a little, but he says, "I fear that I shall break down." Dear Brother, if you get a message from God to tell, then tell it, and do not be afraid, for, "underneath are the everlasting arms." You are seeking to gather a few young people together and you are trying to bless them, but you feel your own weakness so much that you say, "I know I shall make a failure of it." Do not say so, for, "underneath are the everlasting arms!" He who helps us when we go down, down, down, is equally ready to do so when we are going up in His service! When our ardent zeal is bearing us forward to do something more for the Lord than we are quite equal to, then, "underneath are the everlasting arms." And if you are seeking greater holiness, daring to indulge a loftier joy—if you are

trying to sing some of those hymns which, a few months ago, you thought were pitched in too high a key for you—be bold and daring! Your wing feathers will grow by your very attempt to fly! The possibilities of Grace are boundless—leave yourself to them. Be not always weak and trembling. God help you to become as a David, and you who are as David, to become as an angel of the Lord!

Once more, the hour will come *when everything will begin to melt away beneath your feet*. Earthly comforts will fail you, friends will be unable to help you—they can wipe the clammy sweat from your brow and moisten your lips with a drop of water—but they cannot go with you on the great voyage upon which you are about to be launched. When heart and flesh fail, then may the Lord speak to you the sweet words before us, “Underneath are the everlasting arms!” It will be a sinking to the flesh, but a rising to the spirit! Underneath dying saints there is the living God! Be not afraid, therefore, even to die, for, to the Christian, “to die is gain.” I remember, at a funeral, when we laid the body of one of God’s saints in the grave, a dear minister prayed, “Lord, we thank You that though our dear friend has come so low as to be in his grave, he cannot go any lower, for, ‘underneath are the everlasting arms,’ and in due time You will bring him up, again, in those everlasting arms, raised in the likeness of his Lord.”

That is true of all Believers! Therefore let this text come sweetly home to your heart—“Underneath are the everlasting arms.”

I must conclude with this remark. There are some here who are not yet saved. I would illustrate the way of salvation to you by this text. You are hoping to save yourself. You are depending upon something that you have *done*, or that you have *felt*. I want you to let all that go, to give up every hope you have that comes out of yourself. “Oh,” you say, “but I shall fall.” Yes, you will, and that falling shall be your salvation, for, “underneath are the everlasting arms.” There you are, up at that window, and the flames are raging behind you so that you cannot escape—but one stands below. He is strong enough to catch you in his arms and he says, “Drop into my arms! Do not hesitate!” Jesus Christ never yet allowed any soul to be injured that dropped into His arms. Let go, man, let go! Let go everything and drop into the arms of Jesus! That is the saving thing—to let everything else go and trust only to Jesus, depending wholly upon Him who lived, and died, and rose again—and is the ever-living Savior of sinners. Drop into His arms! They are everlasting arms, as strong to save, now, as they were 1,800 years ago! Drop into His arms. God help you to do so, for His name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: DEUTERONOMY 8.

Verse 1. *All the commandments which I command you this day shall you observe to do, that you may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers.* Every word, here, seems emphatic. Like the children of Israel, we are to observe all the commandments of the Lord our God—not merely some of them, picking and choosing as we please. It is a very ill conscience which regards some

of God's statutes and pays no attention to others! In fact, the very act of making a selection as to what commands we will observe is gross disobedience. "All the commandments which I command you this day shall you observe to do."

Notice that we are not only to do as we are bidden, but to do it with carefulness—"you shall observe to do." God would not have a thoughtless, careless, blind service! We must bow our mind and heart as well as our will to His service. Remember, also, that it is not sufficient to "observe" the commandments so as to note what they are, but we are to "observe to do" them. That observation which does not end in right practice is like a promising blossom upon a tree which never knits and which, therefore, produces no fruit. Further notice that to walk in the ways of God is for our own benefit as well as for His Glory—"That you may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers."

There are, doubtless, many good things which we miss because we are not careful in our walking. I am sure that the happiest life will be found to be that which is most carefully conducted upon the principles of holy obedience to God's commands. There are certain blessings which God will not give to us while we are disobedient to Him. Many a father feels that he cannot indulge his child as he would wish to indulge him when he finds the child negligent as to his father's will. So, if we please God, God will please us, but, if we walk contrary to Him, He will walk contrary to us. Let me read this most instructive verse again, that it may be further impressed upon your memories and your hearts—"All the commandments which I command you this day shall you observe to do, that you may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers." To help you in obeying these commands, it is added—

2. *And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your hearts whether you would keep His commandments, or no.* Look back and derive from your past experience a motive for more careful obedience in the future. He does not read his own life aright who does not see in it abundant causes for gratitude—and how can gratitude express itself better than by a cheerful, hearty obedience in the present and the future?

3. *And He humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna,* These two sentences come very closely together—"Suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna." I suppose we are not fit to eat heavenly bread till first of all we begin to hunger for it. God loves to give to men who will eat with an appetite—"He suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna."

3. *Which you knew not, neither did your fathers know.* It was a new kind of food and even in the day when they ate it, they did not fully know what it was. They saw that it came by a miracle and it remained a mystery and, I think we can say that though we have fed upon the Bread of Heaven, some of us, for well-near 40 years, yet we hardly know, nor dare to think that we know, what it is made of, nor can we tell all the sweetness that is in it. We know the love of Christ, but it still passes our

knowledge. It is true of us, as of Israel in the wilderness, “He humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna, which you knew not, neither did your fathers know.”

3. *That He might make you know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live.* It is a grand thing to be delivered from materialism, to be freed from the notion that the outward means are absolutely essential for the accomplishment of the Divine Purpose. If God had so willed it, we could have lived on air—if the air had been sanctified by the Word of God and prayer for such a use! The Lord has, however, chosen to feed us upon bread—yet our highest life, our real life, does not live on bread, but it lives on the Word which proceeds out of the mouth of God! This is one of the passages with which our Lord fought Satan in the desert and overcame him. Happy is that servant of God who will arm himself with this same Truth and feel, “I am not to be provided for merely by money, or by anything else that is visible. God will somehow provide for me and I can leave all care about the means, if the means fail, and get away to the God of the means and lean, not on what I see, but on that arm which is invisible! That which you can see may fail you, for it is, like yourself, a shadow. But He whom you cannot see will never fail you. The strongest sinew in an arm of flesh will crack, but the eternal arm never fails and never is shortened! Lean on that arm and you shall never be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end! It takes 40 years to teach some people that lesson, but some, alas, have not learned it even at the end of 80 years!

4. *Your raiment waxed not old upon you, neither did your feet swell these forty years.* See how God not only cares for His people’s food, but for their raiment, also. We may, therefore, well take heed to Paul’s injunction—“Having food and raiment let us be therewith content.” Whether it was by a miracle that the Israelites’ raiment did not wear out, or whether it came to pass, in the order of Providence, that they were able to get fresh clothing when it *did* wear out, does not matter at all—it made no difference to them how it was arranged, for it was equal kindness on the part of God who provided for them. “Neither did your feet swell.” We call the Arab, sometimes, “The pilgrim of the weary feet,” but the Israelites’ feet were not weary. They traversed a stony wilderness, yet God kept them in such health and strength that their feet swelled not even after 40 years of journeying! You and I often get worn out in 40 hours—forty days are as long as we can hope to go. But God enabled His ancient people to go on for 40 years and still their feet swelled not. Dr. Watts sweetly sang—

***“Mere mortal power shall fade and die,
And youthful vigor cease.
But we that wait upon the Lord
Shall feel our strength increase!
The saints shall mount on eagles’ wings,
And taste the promised bliss,
Till their unwearied feet arrive
Where perfect pleasure is.”***

5. *You shall also consider in your heart that, as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you.* We sometimes think that we

could do without the Lord's chastening. If He will give us food and raiment and keep our feet from swelling, we will not crave the rod. No, but though we do not *ask* for it, the rod is one of the choicest blessings of the Covenant—and if we are the Lord's children, we shall not go without it! To come under Divine discipline is one of the greatest mercies we can ever have. Many of us, who are now men and women, thank God for earthly parents who have corrected us. We wonder what we would have been if there had been no discipline in our father's house. So, truly, is it with all of us who are God's children—in years to come we shall prize the chastisement which now makes us grieve. Even now it is well if, by faith, we can apply to our own heart this text—"as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you."

6, 7. *Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him. For the LORD your God brings you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills.* There are changes in our condition. Israel was not always in the wilderness—the chosen people were brought into a good land, into a place of rest from their weary wandering. So it may happen to you and to me that even in temporal circumstances, God may work a great change for us—and especially will He do this in *spiritual* matters. After a time of wilderness traveling, we who have believed enter into rest—we come to understand the Gospel—and he who understands the Gospel is not, any longer, in the wilderness! In a certain sense, he has come into the land of promise where he already enjoys Covenant mercies. It is true that the Canaanite is still in that land and we have to drive him out, but it is a good land to which God has brought us, "a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills." The Lord makes us drink of the river of His good pleasure. He satisfies us with the cooling streams of His Covenant love.

8. *A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil, and honey.* I will not go into a spiritualizing of all this, but I know that you who have come to believe in Christ and have entered, by faith, into His rest, know what sweet things God has provided for you—not merely bare necessities, but choice delights. He gives you to eat of the sweetnesses. He gives you the fatnesses—the wines on the lees, well-refined, and the fat things full of marrow. I trust that there are many here who know the blessed experience of joy and peace in believing. You have entered into a fair region. You have passed through the belt of storms. You have come where the trade winds blow heavenward, Your sails are filled, your vessel skips along before the breeze. You are making good progress towards the Fair Havens of eternal happiness!

9. *A land wherein you shall eat bread without scarceness, you shall not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you may dig brass.* There are deep things hidden away in the Gospel treasures. Silver and gold there may be none, but then, iron and copper are much more useful things—and the most useful things we shall ever need in this life lie hidden beneath the surface of the Gospel! If we know how to dig deep, we shall be abundantly rewarded by the treasures which we shall discover. Well now, if your experience has thus changed.

If you have left the fiery serpents and the howling wilderness behind you and have come into a place of peace and enjoyment, what follows?

10. *When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.* He permits you to eat—not to satiety, but you may eat and be full—only not so full but that you can always bless His name! Do not be afraid of holy joy! Eat and be full of it, only let it never take your heart away from Him who gives you the joy. On the contrary, bless your God for the good land which He has given you. It is said that in the olden times, pious Jews always blessed God before they ate, and always blessed God *after* they ate. They blessed God for the fragrance of the flower whenever they smelt it. Whenever they drank a cup of water, they blessed the Lord who gave them drink out of the rock in the desert. Oh, that we were always full of praises of God! Then it would not hurt us to be full of meat. But if we get full of meat and are empty of praises, this is mischievous, indeed!

11. *Beware that you forget not the LORD your God, in not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes, which I command you this day.* That would be practical atheism—not keeping the commandments of God is one of the most vivid ways of forgetting Him!

12-14. *Lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; then your heart is lifted up and you forget the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.* The other day a friend asked me this question, “From where does God get His princes?” And the answer I gave was, “He often picks them off dunghills.” Oh, but they sometimes forget the dunghills where they grew and think themselves wonderfully important individuals! Then there is a time of pulling down for them. We cannot eat and be full without having the temptation of getting our heart lifted up! It is a great blessing to have the heart lifted up in one way, that is, in God’s way—but to be lifted up by bread, to be lifted up by silver, to be lifted up by flocks and herds is such a bad way of being lifted up that evil and sorrow must come of it! See, the Lord does not forbid His people to build a house, or to eat and to enjoy what He gives them. But He does charge them not to forget the God who gave them these mercies, nor to forget where they used to be in slavery—“Beware that you forget not the Lord your God which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.”

16. *Who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought you forth water out of the rock of flint.* I cannot but pause as I remember my own passage through “that great and terrible wilderness, where there was no water.” When a soul is under conviction of sin, “fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought” are very *feeble images* of the pains and miseries that come of guilt unforgiven! “Where there was no water.” Oh, what would we not have given, then, to have understood a little of that Gospel which, perhaps, we now despise? Oh, what would we not have given, then, just to have moistened our burning lips with the Living Water of the precious Word in which, possibly, now we see no re-

freshing? May God have mercy upon us for our forgetfulness of His great mercy! Let us, with deep gratitude, think of Him again—"Who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought you forth water out of the rock of flint." "More likely," says one, "to bring fire rather than water out of a rock of flint." And it did seem as if the Cross of the curse must have cursed us, yet it blessed us! The Lord brought forth Living Water out of that Rock which was smitten for guilty man!

16, 17. *Who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers knew not, that He might humble you, and that He might prove you, to do you good at your latter end; and you said in your heart, My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.* We must not say this about either temporal or spiritual wealth! If we have grown in Grace and have become useful, and are spiritually a blessing to others, we must not take any credit for it—or else down we shall go before long! God did not enrich you that you might set up for a god in opposition to Him. Christ did not love you that you might make yourself a rival to Him. Oh, that must not be! We must never say in our heart, "My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth."

18, 19. *But you shall remember the LORD your God: for it is He that gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His Covenant which He swore unto your fathers, as it is this day. And it shall be, if you do at all forget the LORD your God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish.* If you live like sinners, you will die like sinners! "Where, then, is the perseverance of the saints?" asks one. Why, in this, that they *shall not live like sinners!* God's Grace will not let them go wandering after idols to worship and to serve them! He will keep us faithful to Himself, but if we will wander after idol gods, it *proves that we are not the Lord's true Israel,* and we must expect to be served as others have been who have turned aside to worship idols—

20. *As the nations which the LORD destroys before your face, so shall you perish; because you would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.*

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PRESENT PRIVILEGE AND FUTURE FAVOR

NO. 624

DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, MARCH 29, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT UPTON CHAPEL.

***“The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms:
and He shall thrust out the enemy from before you.
And shall say, Destroy them.”
Deuteronomy 33:27.***

THERE is a great satisfaction in having such a text as this, for even if the preacher should not be able to say anything to edification, yet the text itself is rich food for the saints and may fully satisfy their hunger. Let but a child of God really digest such a royal dainty as this and he shall be as well fed as was Elijah when, waking up, found food under the juniper tree, in the strength of which he might go for forty days. This one verse may, by the Holy Spirit, be made sufficiently nourishing to sustain a Believer from that place where he now is, to the gates of Glory. “The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

It is fabled that the swan sings but once and that just before it dies. So Moses, who had been all his life a Prophet, now closes his career a *poet* and dies singing! He praises God, setting Him above all gods and defying all men to find one like unto Him. “Who is like unto the God of Jeshurun?” Not satisfied with this, he also exalts in the highest degree all the people who have God to be their portion. “Happy are you, O Israel. Who is like unto you?” I may say that my text is a combination of the two—he is here extolling God, the everlasting and eternal God who is our refuge—and he is here admiring the privilege of Believers who have such a God to rest upon.

While we are speaking, therefore, this evening, if you are not profited by our words, yet your hearts may be blessed if you praise God for His great goodness towards you. And may you also feel melted with holy joy at the blessed privileges which belong to you as the people of God—in having such a God who is so good to you. The text naturally divides itself into two parts—the present and the future. In the present we have the eternal God to be our refuge. In the future it is written that He shall thrust out the enemy from before us and shall say, “Destroy them.”

I. Beginning then, with the first part of the text, THE PRESENT BLESSING appeals to me to give us three distinct thoughts. God is our shelter. “The eternal God is your refuge.” But the word, “refuge,” according to many of the best translators, may be read, “mansion,” or “abiding place.” So here comes a second thought—that God is our abode. Then the next sentence gives us the third thought, “And underneath are the everlasting arms,” so that God is our *support*, as well as our shelter and our abode.

1. We will begin our meditation, in the Spirit's power, by considering God as our shelter. The children of Israel, while they were in Egypt and in the wilderness, were a type of God's visible Church on earth. Moses was speaking primarily of them, but secondarily, of all the chosen ones of God in every age. Now, as God was the shelter of His ancient people Israel, so is He the refuge of His saints through all time. And first, He was eminently their shelter when they were under bondage and the yoke was heavy. When they had to make bricks without straw and the taskmasters oppressed them, then the people cried unto the Lord and God heard their cry and sent unto them His servant Moses.

So also there often comes to men a time when they begin to feel the oppression of Satan. I believe that many ungodly men feel the slavery of their position. Even some of those who are never converted have sense enough to feel at times that the service of Satan is a hard one, yielding but little pleasure and involving awful risks. Some men cannot go long making bricks without straw without being more or less conscious that they are in the house of bondage. These, who are not God's people, under the pressure of mind consequent upon a partial discovery of their state, turn to some form of pleasure or self-righteousness in order to forget their burden and yoke.

But God's elect people, moved by a higher power, are led to cry unto their God. It is one of the first signs of a chosen soul—that it seems to know, as if by heavenly instinct—where its true refuge is. Dear Brothers and Sisters, you remember that although you knew but little of Christ—and in doctrinal matters you were very dark, though you did not understand, perhaps, even your own need—yet there was a something in you that made you pray and realize that only at the Mercy Seat could you find your refuge.

Before you were a Christian, before you could say—"Christ is mine"—your bedside was the witness to many flowing tears when your aching heart poured itself out before God, perhaps in strains like these—"O God, I need something. I do not know what it is I need, but I feel a heaviness of spirit. My mind is burdened and I feel that You only can unburden me. I know that I am a sinner! Oh, that You would forgive me! I hardly understand the plan of salvation, but one thing I know—I want to be saved! I would arise and go unto my Father—my heart pants to make Your bosom my refuge."

Now, I say that this is one of the first indications that such a soul is one of God's chosen, for it is true, just as it was of Israel in Egypt, that God is the refuge of His people even when they are under the yoke. When captivity is led captive, the Eternal God becomes the refuge of His people from their sins. The Israelites were brought out of Egypt. They were free—albeit they were marching they knew not where—yet their chains were snapped. They were emancipated and needed not to call any man, "Master."

But look, Pharaoh is angry and he pursues them! With his horses and his chariots he hastens after them. The enemy said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil. My lust shall be satisfied upon them." Thus there is a period in the spiritual life when sin labors to drag back the

sinner who has newly escaped from it. Like hosts ready for battle, all the poor sinner's past iniquities hurry after him and overtake him in a place where his way is hedged in. The poor fugitive would escape, but he cannot! What, then, must he do? You remember, then, Moses cried unto the Lord. When nothing else could be found to afford shelter to the poor escaped slaves. When the Red Sea rolled before them and the mountains shut them in on either side. When an angry foe pursued them, there was one road which was not stopped up and that was the king's highway upward to the Throne—the way to their God—and therefore they began at once to travel that road, lifting up their hearts in humble prayer to God, trusting that He would deliver them.

You know the story too well for me to need to repeat it here—how the uplifted rod divided the watery deeps. How the people passed through the sea as a horse through the wilderness and how the Lord brought all the hosts of Egypt into the depths of the sea—that He might utterly destroy them so that not one of them was left and those who had seen them one day saw them no more forever.

Beloved, in this sense God is still the refuge of His people. Our sins which pursued us so hotly have been drowned in the depths of the Savior's blood. They sank to the bottom like stones. The depths have covered them—there is not one, no, not one of them left—and we, standing upon the shore in safety can shout in triumph over our drowned sins! "Sing unto the Lord for He has triumphed gloriously and all our iniquities has He cast into the midst of the sea." While God is thus the refuge of His people under the yoke, and when sin seeks to overcome them, He is also their refuge in times of need.

The children of Israel journeyed into the wilderness but there was nothing for them to feed upon there. The arid sand yielded them neither leeks, nor garlic, nor cucumbers. And no brooks or rivers, like the Nile, were there to quench their thirst. They would have famished if they had been left to depend upon the natural productions of the soil. They came to Marab, where there was a well, but the water was very bitter. At other stations there were no wells whatever and even bitter water was not to be had. What then? Why, the unfailing refuge of God's people in the wilderness was prayer. Moses, their representative, always betook himself to the Most High—at times falling upon his face in agony and at other seasons climbing to the top of the hill and there pleading in solemn communion with God that He would deliver the people.

And you have heard full often how men did eat angels' food in the desert—how Jehovah rained bread from Heaven upon His people in the howling wilderness and how He smote the rock and waters gushed forth. You have not forgotten how the strong wind blew and brought them flesh so that they ate and were satisfied. Israel had no need unsupplied. Their garments waxed not old and though they went through the wilderness, their feet grew not sore. God supplied all their needs. We in our land must go to the baker, the butcher, the clothier and many others in order to equip ourselves fully. But the men of Israel went to God for everything. We have to store up our money and buy this in one place and that in the other—but the Eternal God was their refuge and their resort for every-

thing and in every time of need they had nothing to do but to lift up their voice to Him.

Now it is just so with us spiritually. Faith sees our position today to be just that of the children of Israel then—whatever our needs are the Eternal God is our refuge. God has promised you that your bread shall be given you and that your water shall be sure. He who gives spirituals will not deny temporals. The Mighty Master will never suffer you to perish while He has it in His power to succor you. Go to Him with whatever may be the trouble which weighs you down. Do not suppose your case too bad, for nothing is too hard for the Lord! Dream not that He will refuse to undertake temporals as well as spirituals—He cares for you in all things.

In everything you are to give thanks, and surely in everything by prayer and supplication you may make known your needs unto God. In times when the cruse of oil is ready to fail and the handful of meal is all but spent, then go to the All-Sufficient God and you shall find that they who trust in Him shall not lack any good thing. Furthermore, our God is the refuge of His saints when their enemies rage. When the host was passing through the wilderness they were suddenly attacked by the Amalekites. Unprovoked, these marauders of the desert set upon them and destroyed the tail end of them. And what did Israel do? The people did not ask to have a strong body of horsemen, hired out of the land of Egypt for their refuge, or even if they did wish it, He who was their wiser self, Moses, looked to another arm than that of man, for he cried unto God!

How glorious is that picture of Moses, with uplifted hands, upon the top of the hill giving victory to Joshua in the plains below! Those uplifted arms were worth ten thousand men to the hosts of Israel. No, twice ten thousand had not so easily gotten a victory as did those two extended arms which brought down Omnipotence itself from Heaven! This was Israel's master-weapon of war—their confidence in God. Joshua shall go forth with men of war, but the Lord, Jehovah-Nissi, is the banner of the fight and the giver of the victory! Thus, dear Friends, the Eternal God is our refuge. When our foes rage we need not fear their fury. Let us not seek to be without enemies, but let us take our case and spread it before God.

We cannot be in such a position—that the weapons of our foes can hurt us, while the promise stands good—"No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper and every tongue that rises against you in judgment You shall condemn." Though earth and Hell should unite in malice, the Eternal God is our castle and stronghold, securing to us an everlasting refuge. To close our remarks upon this point—when their falls into sin had cursed the people of God and provoked the Most High so that He sent fiery serpents among them—even then the Eternal God was their refuge. When we are conscious that sin has brought us into any mischief or sorrow, we are apt to feel—"I must not go to God with this, because it is clearly the natural and inevitable result of my sin—it is a rod of my own making."

Yes, but we may go even with *that*, for if the Lord should send the fiery serpents, still, you must fly into the arms of that very God who has sent the serpents to bite you—for it is He, and He alone who can lift up the bronze serpent before your tearful eyes and give you life through looking

at it! We make a mistake when we imagine that we may not go to God as sinners! We may feel unworthy to go, but we must not think that we shall be unwelcome. I do not go to my Heavenly Father in times of need because I feel there are excellencies in *me* which will qualify me for receiving His help! No! I go because I feel unfit to be blessed and am therefore anxious for the blessing!

I go because I feel unworthy of deliverance and am the more desirous that I may get deliverance from the God of Grace. The Eternal God, then, is our refuge in a thousand ways. I have only given you a few hints on this part of the subject but we will sum them up and then you can enlarge on them at your leisure. Under the yoke, before sin is forgiven, if you are a child of God the Eternal God is your refuge. When you have escaped from sin and the past haunts you, still the Eternal God is your refuge. When, in the wilderness, your needs press you down, whether they are temporal or spiritual, then the Eternal God is your refuge. And when your enemies attack you, or your own guilt has brought you into such a position that God Himself chastises you sharply, still, even then it holds good and true that the Eternal God is your refuge if you believe in Him.

2. Now take the second thought with brevity. The Eternal God is our mansion, our dwelling, our abiding place. The children of Israel had no other and therefore if God were not their dwelling place, they were houseless. Pilgrims of the weary foot. They found no city to dwell in. At eventide they pitched their tents but they struck them again in the morning. The trumpet sounded and they were up and away. If they were in a comfortable valley for one day, yet that relentless trumpet bade them resume their wearisome march through the wilderness in the morning. And, perhaps they thought they lingered the longest where an encampment was least desirable. Nevertheless they always had a dwelling place in their God.

If I might use such a description without seeming to be fanciful, I would say that the great cloudy canopy which covered them all day long from the heat of the sun was their roof—and that the blazing pillar which protected them by night was their family fireside. God Himself dwelt in the very midst of them in the bright shining light, the Shekinah, within the holy place and up from the very spot there rose the great pillar which was cloud by day and fire by night. And so, within the compass of God's protecting Presence they found a perpetual abode. So Moses sings, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations."

Wherever they were, if they were but under the shadow of that cloud they were quite at home and whenever they got within the radius of the bright pillar of fire, they felt that they were not away from the family circle. Now I hope that many of us can say that the Eternal God is our dwelling place—

***"Home, home,
Sweet home,
There's no place like home,"***

says the song, and certainly, if God is our home, the song has a depth of sweetness in it. At home one feels safe. An Englishman's house is his castle—who shall intrude upon him there? When the bolt is drawn, when the curtains are drawn, when the family gathers round the fireside, then we

have shut the world and all our enemies' babbling tongues out and we dwell in quiet.

So when we get to our God, not bolts of brass nor gates of iron could guard God's people so well as that wall of fire which Jehovah is to all His chosen. When we draw near to God in sweet communion we feel as if the devil himself were dumb—

***“Then, let the earth's old pillars shake,
And all the wheels of Nature break.
Our steadfast souls shall fear no more,
Than solid rocks when billows roar.”***

At home, too, we take our rest. Out in the world, in the workshop, we toil until the sweat streams from our face. In the pulpit, in the midst of our congregations, our mind is so active and on the alert that the brain is often wearied. But at home we cast ourselves down upon the couch and feel that now the day's work is over and that the happy evening of rest has come.

When I get to my God, no servile works have I to do—no hewing of wood and drawing of water, like a Gibeonite, in God's house! But here I am, His servant, happy in His service and finding sweet rest in what I do for Him. “We that have believed, do enter into rest,” and there is a peace which, “passes all understanding, which keeps our heart and mind, through Christ Jesus.” At home we let our hearts loose. We cast aside all dignity there—we are no longer on our guard like men in armor. We are not afraid that our children will misunderstand us, or that our dear ones will misconstrue our words and sentiments. We feel at ease.

So is it when we are with our God. I dare tell Him what I dare not tell anyone else. There is no secret of my heart which I would not pour into His ear. There is no wish that might be deemed foolish or ambitious by others which I would not communicate to Him. Surely, if “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him,” the secrets of them that fear Him ought to be, and must be with their Lord. It is at home, if anywhere, that a man is thoroughly happy and delighted. He takes his soul's best solace there. His eyes sparkle most at his own fireside. Whatever the man may be abroad with all his cares and his troubles, he can't wait to get home, as going to the place of his delight.

So I trust it is with us and our God. We go out, like Noah's dove. With weary wings we fly over the watery waste, ready to drop. But we come back again, like that same dove, into Noah's hand and there we find our resting place forever. It is for home that a man works and labors. I am sure when I see the workers filling the streets, just when work is over, that the most of them have a home to go to for the sake of which they toil. What makes that man work so hard? Why, there are three little ones at home who must be fed! How is it that he is content to go through so much toil? There is a wife at home dear to his soul and for her and the babes he fights the battle of life bravely.

Be it ever so homely. Be it up ever so many pairs of stairs, yet the thought of that little room and of the dear ones there at home gives strength to the man to bear his burden and helps his fingers to fly the quicker over his work. In this sense, too, I think we can say that our gracious God is our home, our mansion. The love of God strengthens us. We

do but think of Him in the Person of His dear Son and a glimpse of the suffering face of the Redeemer constrains us to labor. We feel that we *must* work, for we have brethren yet to be saved! We have uncalled ones yet to be brought in! We have the head of Christ to crown—we have the Father's heart to make glad by bringing home to Him His wayward and wandering sons.

We will pause here and see if we can say, "Yes, 'tis true, Lord. You are, as the Eternal God, our mansion and dwelling place." I pray, dear Friends, do not say this in words unless you know in truth that the Eternal God is your dwelling place.

3. We must be very brief on the third part of this present privilege—"Underneath are the everlasting arms." This means that God is our support, and our support just when we begin to sink. We want support when we are sinking and by the arms being "underneath," it seems that this support is given just when we are going down. At certain seasons the Christian sings very low in humiliation. He has a deep sense of his own sin. He is humbled before God till he scarcely knows how to lift up his face and pray because he appears, in his own sight, so abject, so mean, so base, so worthless.

Well, Child of God, remember that when you are at your worst, yet "underneath you are the everlasting arms." Christ's Atonement dives deeper than your sin. Sin may sink you ever so low, but the great Atonement is still under all! I will give you a text which proves it. "He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." You may have gone very low, but you can never have gone so low as, "the uttermost." Here is another. "All manner of sin and of iniquity shall be forgiven unto men." You have plunged into nearly all sorts of sin, but you have not gone into, "all manner of sin." Or if you have, it may be forgiven so that this promise goes underneath you. The love of God, the power of the blood and the prevalence of the intercession are deeper down than sin with all its Hell-born vileness can ever sink the sinner while breath is in his nostrils

Again, the Christian sometimes sinks very deeply in sore trials from without. He loses his property. His children die. His wife is carried to the grave—every earthly prop is cut away. What then? He goes down, down, down—yet still underneath him are the everlasting arms! You cannot sink so deep in distress and affliction, but what the Covenant Grace of an ever-faithful God will be still lower than you are—even when at your very lowest! Look at your Savior—you are never so low as He was. Perhaps you cannot pay your rent and you are to be turned out of that little room—this is falling low, indeed. But what did your Savior say—"Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay My head."

I have supposed you to be in a very sad case, but, you see, underneath you there are the sufferings of Christ. Perhaps your friends have forsaken you. Yes, but hear Him—"He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me." He is deeper in the mire than you. You are very, very, very poor, but see, there He hangs upon the Cross—stripped naked, without a rag to cover Him—deserted by all. You have gone very far, but not so far as that. Jesus represents the great goodness of God in its communion

with your need and in Him your God puts underneath you His everlasting arms.

Possibly you are sinking very deep down, under trouble from within. You have felt such vexatious of spirit as you never thought you could have known. You have waged such a conflict as you never dreamed of. The fountains of the great deep have been broken up. And, as a deluge, sin threatens to cover your spirit and drown all the life in your heart. Beloved, you cannot, even there, be brought so low as Christ was, for what did He say—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

God is still with you to be your succor and if you have lost the light of your Father's countenance, yet you have not lost it to so great an extent as your Savior did. You have not yet sweat "great drops of blood." You have not yet prayed with strong crying and tears and found that the cup could not be removed altogether. You have not yet descended into the depths, as your Savior did. And so we will take it for granted that underneath you, wherever you may be, there are the everlasting arms. I think I see the devil trying to drown a Believer, but underneath are the everlasting arms. Satan says, "I will have him yet," and down he dives lower still—but the everlasting arms are even there.

Why, look what he did with Jonah. He got him into the whale's belly, but he was not content with that. The whale, of course, was near the surface when it first sucked Jonah in. But it goes down, perhaps half a mile—it must go deeper yet and so it stirs up the deep in its pain, for it has an indigestible morsel within and it does not know what to do with it. It plunges down, down, DOWN, till Jonah says he went to the bottoms of the mountains and the weeds were wrapped about his head and the earth with her bars was about him forever—yet even then, "underneath were the everlasting arms," and therefore the whale comes up and Jonah stands upon the dry land once more! So shall it be with you, Beloved, for in your worst trials and times of difficulty underneath you are the everlasting arms!

And this, also, I may give you by way of comfort in any weary labors in which you may be engaged. There are some of God's servants who feel as if they would willingly die—for to serve God, though very pleasant—is at times very hard work. And when one is sincere in God's service and is ready to drop, one will cry out, "Oh, when shall the day of rest come?" Courage, courage, you fainting soldier! Underneath are the everlasting arms—you shall have strength equal to your day! Your shoes shall be iron and brass! You shall end your journey well and you shall fight the fight till the victory comes.

At last, when death comes, the promise shall still hold good. We shall stand in the midst of Jordan and, like poor Christian, it is possible that we may begin to sink—but may we have some Hopeful with us then, to say, as Hopeful did to Christian, "Be of good cheer, my Brother. I feel the bottom, it is good"—for underneath us there will be the everlasting arms. You may be full of pain and anguish and the spirit may sink into a spiritual death even before the natural death comes on. You may feel dying to be dreadful work. But still, if the worst should come to worst—you shall yet in the hour of extremity win the victory! You shall triumph over death

and enter into the Presence of God and bless His name because, “underneath you are the everlasting arms.”

I can scarcely venture on the second part of my subject tonight at all, for we have not done with the first point. I wish you to notice those two phrases which are the pith of the text. “The Eternal God.” “Everlasting arms.” “The Eternal God.” Here is antiquity. The God who was before all worlds is forever my God. Oh, how I love that word, “eternal”! But, Brothers and Sisters, there are some people who do not believe in an Eternal God. At any rate they do not believe in Him as being *theirs* eternally. They do not believe that they belonged to Christ before they were born. They have a notion that they only had God to be theirs when they believed on Him for the first time. They do not believe in Covenant settlements and eternal decrees and the ancient purposes of the Most High.

But let me say that for comfort there is no thought more full of sweetness than that of an Eternal God engaged in Christ Jesus to His people to love and bless and save them all! One who has made them the distinguished objects of His discriminating regard from all eternity. It is the ETERNAL God. And then there are the “everlasting arms”—arms that will never drop, arms that will never grow weary, arms that will never lose their strength. They put the two words, “eternal,” and, “everlasting,” together and they remind us of another sweet word—immutability. An everlasting God that faints not, neither is weary, that changes not and turns not from His promise. Such is the God we delight to adore and to use as our eternal shelter, our dwelling place and our support.

II. The second part of the subject, AS TO THE FUTURE, I cannot dwell upon for want of time but only give you an outline of what one might have said upon it if there had been opportunity. He who has been our God in the past will certainly be our God in the future! And in the future we have two things to comfort us—Divine work, and we have a Divine command. Here is the Divine work—He will thrust out our enemies before us. Whatever your difficulties may be, whatever your sins may be against which you have to contend, remember, Jehovah leads the van and crushes your foes before you come to them.

You have to fight, Christian, with vanquished enemies and it is an easy thing when you have to overcome a dragon who has had his head broken already by your risen Lord. Therefore Dr. Watts makes us sing for our comfort—

***“Hell and your sins resist your course,
But Hell and sin are vanquished foes!
Your Savior nailed them to the Cross,
And sung the triumph when He rose.”***

Before you get to your difficulties, your God will have removed them. The stone was laid at the mouth of the sepulcher and the women said, “Who shall roll away the stone?” But when they arrived at the spot they found that the stone had been rolled away by an angel long before.

March on, Christian—the Jordan may be very deep—but as soon as the feet of God’s priests touch the border of the river it shall be dried up! You shall have before you ten thousand things which may appall you, but if you will but go on in the strength of faith, they shall prove to be but the shadows which disappear when the sun rises. There is Divine work al-

ways going on before God's people—His shield always goes in front—His sword always cuts and clears the way and we have but to follow where He leads. When the children of Israel passed over Jordan, the priests who bore the ark first dipped their feet in the stream and it parted before the servants of the Lord because God was between the cherubim.

So in every crossing which lies in the path to the city of our God, that better city, Jerusalem the golden, we see the footprints of one who is our Priest—touched with a sense of our infirmities and griefs because He has endured the same before us! It is He who has planted His feet in the darkest depths and made a path through the mightiest waters so that we need not fear—but may boldly plunge in—assured that we only follow Him whose Presence will ever enable us to say, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me, Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.”

We follow the Captain of our salvation who says, “Come on, follow Me.” He goes before. Every dart that wounds you passes by Him. Yes, He has felt the first smart of each poisoned arrow in the devil's quiver and the venomous power has been washed away in His blood. There is not a weapon in Hell's armory whose edge has not been turned on the armor of our great Champion. The keenness of every blade is gone since it was buried in His wounds. When Jacob wrestled with the nameless one till the break of day, he came out of the contest with one sinew withered so that he limped to his grave. And thus each of our foes has received a touch from the finger of Him, “who comes up from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, traveling in the greatness of His strength.”

And that touch has crippled the power of our enemies. They are spoiled and robbed of much of their satanic might because they have been beneath the heel of Him who has trod down all our foes beneath His feet. Still, we are not to be idle, for we have next a Divine *command*. He shall thrust out our enemies, but He will also say, “Destroy them.” We have to take God's Word and to be obedient to it in the future. Whatever sins we have, there is only one thing to be done with them and that is to “destroy them.”

A man has a number of faults and he says, “Well, Sir, there is my drunkenness and my swearing and so on. I am quite agreeable to what you say, I will destroy them. I will hang them on a gallows as high as that on which Haman would have hanged Mordecai. But, Sir, I have little a trick in my trade—I should not like to tell everybody of it—it is a very profitable one and I do not think it is so very bad, for nearly everybody else in the trade does it. Do you not think the best way would be to practice it and give part of the money I get by it to God's cause? I will be very careful and do it only when compelled.”

My dear Friend, I have only one thing to say to you about your sin and that is, “destroy it!” Do not try to make it better, to dress it up, swear it in and make a soldier of it for Christ—no—destroy it! This is your work. If your eyes offend you, “pluck them out.” “Oh,” says another, “but I have a very bad temper. I sometimes fly into a passion. I think I must try to get over it by *degrees*, but still I can make a great many excuses for myself and am I not quite right in doing so?” My dear Sir, I can only say one

thing and that is, “destroy it,” for the only proper treatment of sin is to cut it off and cast it from you. Do not pamper it or excuse it, but destroy it! Smite it to the heart if you can and never be satisfied till you have utterly destroyed it.

Look at Saul. He has been against the Amalekites and he brings home a very beautiful flock of sheep and bullocks and so on. He is told to destroy them all, but he brings them home and Agag with them. Why did he not kill Agag? Well, he was such a gentleman, such a thorough gentleman, that he did not like to kill him. It was a public duty to sweep the commonplace Amalekites out of the way—they were such rascals! But this Agag, why, he walked so delicately, he had such a nice way with him, he was so winning, he had such an enchanting face, had the manners and air, in fact, of an Israelite—it would be a pity, a great pity to kill him!

So Saul brought home the best of the sheep and the beasts and the cattle and Agag with them. But Samuel comes in and is in no sweet mood when he hears the bleating of the sheep. He demands of Saul—“Have you done as God commanded you?” “Yes I have,” said Saul. “Then what mean the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the cattle that I hear?” “Oh,” said Saul, “I did not slay them *all*. I thought I had better spare some of the best of them as an offering unto God, so I kept them alive and I have also kept Agag.”

What came of it? Did the Prophet spare the Amalekite? No, truly! Samuel first told Saul that God had put him away from being king and then he said, “Bring Agag,” and Agag came to him. You can imagine how he would come—and he said, “Surely the bitterness of death is past.” There he stood and I think I see Samuel, getting gray then, very gray and not very fit for such service, but he looked for the nearest sword that he could get and though it is not a Prophet’s work to kill, yet as soon as he could grasp a sword he hewed Agag in pieces! He was not content to cut his head off, but hewed him in pieces, as a man would chop a block of wood—to show the anger and detestation which God had towards the most princely sins.

Now, Christian, your business with sin is in the Spirit’s power to serve it as Samuel did Agag—to hew it in pieces and show the utmost hatred towards it. So far from making excuses for it, seek to devise ways by which you may mortify it and put it to death. When the Prophet Elijah had received the answer to his prayer and the fire from Heaven had consumed the sacrifice in the presence of all the people, he called upon the assembled Israelites to take the priests of Baal and, said he, “Let not one escape.” And he took them all down to the brook Kishon and slew them there.

So must it be with our sins—each one must die—let not one escape! Spare it not for its much crying. Strike, though it be a darling sin as dear as an Isaac. Strike, for God struck at sin when it was on His Son. Even so, with stern unflinching purpose, condemn to death that sin which may have been the darling of your heart. Spare it not, because it may make sport or be of use in any way. Remember Samson, how he gathered strength as his locks grew once more and how he avenged himself upon his foes. Beware lest your sins which are only for awhile repressed and

not totally destroyed, should rise up again and with new-found might should hurl you to the ground and bury you in the wreck of your noblest hopes and deeds.

You will probably ask how you will be able to accomplish this work. Why, take the promise we have been talking about—"The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms." If you would triumph over darkness set yourself in the Presence of the Sun of Righteousness. There is no place so well adapted for the discovery of sin, and recovery from its power and guilt, as the immediate Presence of God. Get into God's arms and you will see how to hit at sin and will gather strength to give the final blow which shall lay the monster in the dust. Job never knew how to get rid of sin half so well as he did when his eye of faith rested on God and he abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes.

The fine gold of the Christian is often becoming dim and the spots will appear upon the surface showing that we dwell among the sons of earth in a world which lies in the Wicked One. We want some sacred fire which shall consume away the dross and give us back the brightness we have lost. Go to God, He is a consuming fire—not to your *spirit*—but to your *sins*. You may so plead the work of Christ and the Covenant of Grace as to make the very Nature of God, which would condemn you out of Christ, to cleanse you, being in Christ Jesus!

You will be sanctified by the God who would have destroyed you had you not fled for refuge to the hope set before you. You have strength to overcome sin given you in the Covenant of Grace. You have strength to drive out your own iniquities. You have strength to win battles for your Master, because in Christ Jesus He has promised to be with you even unto the end. May the past experience stimulate you to future exertion and let the goodness of God excite you to a sacred jealousy and to a holy revenge against those sins which are hateful in His sight. May God bless you, Brethren, for Christ's sake.

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HAPPINESS—THE PRIVILEGE AND DUTY OF CHRISTIANS NO. 1359

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 10, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE. NEWINGTON.**

***“Happy are you, O Israel; who is like unto you? O people saved by the Lord,
the shield of your help, and who is the sword of your excellency!
And your enemies shall be found liars unto you; and
you shall tread upon their high places.”
Deuteronomy 33:29.***

THESE are the last recorded words of Moses and they are significant, for they show us that he found comfort, in his dying moments, in considering the happiness of the people for whom he had labored all his life. From the day when, by God's power, he led them up out of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness, they had never ceased to lie near his heart. They had been a very heavy burden to him at times, but with marvelous meekness and patience he had borne with their many rebellious provocations and only once spoken bitterly of them. Oftentimes had he stood in the gap and made intercession for them, when otherwise they would have been destroyed. He had, for their sakes, given up the most glorious prospect that was ever proposed to the mind of man, for the Lord had said to him in secret, “Let Me alone, that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a greater nation.”

But no, even such a proposal could not divert him from his patriotic zeal for his people! He loved Israel, erring Israel, ungrateful Israel, as a mother loves her child, and family aggrandizement was relinquished for love of the nation. Still he continued to instruct, lead and guide the stiff-necked race, having no thought but God's Glory in the midst of Israel, and no ambition but to see the tribes brought, at length, into the promised land. When about to die, the ruling passion was strong upon him and from it he draws his consolation. He seems to say to himself, “I can no more go out and come in. The Lord has said unto me, You shall not go over this Jordan, but though I must leave the beloved nation, yet they are a happy people and are safe in Jehovah's hands.”

He looks with sparkling eyes at the privileges with which God had enriched them and he feels that he may quietly go up to the mountain and fall asleep, for they would be blessed when he was gone, and saved of the Lord. Ah, my dear young Friends, you who are children of godly families, you cannot tell what joy you will give to your parents if you are converted to God! When they come to die, they will find it one of their sweetest consolations to see their children walking in the Truth of God. They have loved you dearly and they will feel a pang in leaving you, but if they can feel that God has blessed you and saved you, they will die in peace!

I have heard saints, when dying, say, “There is but one thing that I want and for which I could wish to be spared a little longer. I could wish to live to see all my family believing in the Lord. O that all my offspring were lovers of Jesus.” I have heard dying saints express themselves in language somewhat similar to that of David—“The Lord has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, although my house is not so with God as I could desire.” That, “although my house is not so with God,” has been a thorn in their pillow and they have felt it painful to quit their household while yet their children were so unhappy as to be out of Christ and unreconciled to God. Think of this, dear young people, I pray you, and, perhaps, natural affection may be blessed in the hand of God to lead you to seek after eternal salvation.

Thus you see how Moses consoled himself. But why was not this expression of the great Lawgiver left as a soliloquy unrecorded? Moses had cheered himself with this reflection, “Happy are you, O Israel,” what need to write it down, or to utter it before the people? It is frequently an unwise thing to tell a man of his propitious surroundings, for he may become vain of them. You may commend a man’s estate until he foolishly dreams that you are commending *him*. When you praise a man’s position, it is the next thing to flattering the man, for the most of men do not divide between themselves and their condition, but read a commendation of their condition as a commendation of themselves though it is not so!

Therefore, one has sometimes to be very leery of calling men happy—and all the more so because we cannot generally be sure that they *are* happy—external circumstances being but a poor means of judgment. The fairest apple may be rotten at the core! The finest linen may be a cover for a corpse! Moreover, according to the truthful rule of the ancients, no man is to be counted happy till he is dead, seeing that you do not know the whole of his life and it may happen that the circumstances which now appear to be the foundation of a happy life may turn out to be a preparation for increased bitterness in the later part of existence.

Yet Moses speaks thus openly to Israel without a word of qualification or caution—“Happy are you, O Israel; who is like unto you?” Now, we are quite certain that Moses did not err in this. It would be great self-conceit to imagine such a thing! We may confide in the clearness of his judgment, in the maturity of his experience and in the fidelity of his spirit. We are sure that he did not speak with rashness, for he was of a meek and gentle disposition and somewhat slow in speech and, not likely, therefore, to warm into unreasonable enthusiasm and go beyond the sober truth. Above all, the Holy Spirit has adopted the Lawgiver’s words, for He had Himself inspired them—and we have them here in the Infallible Word of God, so that it is quite certain that Israel was happy, even as our text declares.

The people were favored and it was right for them to be told so. A wise design led to their being reminded of the blessed fact. I think that Moses thus eulogized the nation by way of consoling them for his departure. He did as much as say, “I climb the mount to go away to God, but happy are you, O Israel! Whether Moses is with you or not, God is with you.” No

doubt many would say, as the great Lawgiver departed, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof,” but Moses reminds them that the shield of their help and the sword of their excellency would still be with them and they would still be a people saved of the Lord. What better comfort can be offered to bereaved hearts?

I think, also, that he had in his mind’s eye the fact that they were now about to face new difficulties. Under Joshua they were to cross the Jordan and fight the Canaanites. They had known occasional brushes in the wilderness with Amalek and Bashan, but for the most part they had led peaceable lives. Now, however, each man was to be a soldier. From the day in which his foot pressed the promised land, each man was to contend for the mastery and, therefore, Moses sustains them with rich and nourishing meat to strengthen them for the new service.

“Happy are you, O Israel; you are about to throw yourself into the midst of ferocious tribes who will all conspire to cut you off; but you are a people saved of the Lord; your enemies shall be found liars unto you, and you shall tread upon their high places.”—

***“My never-ceasing songs shall show
The mercies of the Lord,
And make succeeding ages know
How faithful is His Word.
The sacred Truths His lips pronounce
Shall firm as Heaven endure;
And if He speak a promise once,
The eternal Grace is sure.
How long the grace of David held
The promised Jewish Throne!
But there’s a nobler Covenant sealed
To David’s greater Son.
His seed forever shall possess
A Throne above the skies;
The meanest subject of His Grace
Shall to that glory rise.”***

So, then, I gather from the example of Moses that to commend a man’s condition, if you have a wise motive for it, and can either console him under trouble or inspire him for future service, is a right thing to do.

This morning we are going to repeat the experiment. Whatever was said about the happy condition of the natural Israel is emphatically true of the *spiritual* Israel! The tribes were our types and what was true of them is true of us. Without any sort of wresting of the text, we shall, this morning, apply to all Believers—to all who rest in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh—the words of Moses to the tribes, “Happy are you, O Israel; who is like unto you? O people saved by the Lord.” We are the *true* Israel, the spiritual seed of the father of the faithful, and to us unbounded happiness belongs. This shall be our point this morning.

First, let us consider the happy condition of God’s people. And then, secondly, let us consider the result of our fully realizing this happiness. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, fill us with all joy and peace while we commune upon this subject. May the blessed God now bless all His children!

I. Let us dwell upon THE HAPPY CONDITION OF GOD'S PEOPLE. The Israelites were so favored that Moses, himself, was astonished at the eminently desirable condition in which they were placed. We may readily imagine that we see him lifting up his hands with surprise and saying, "Happy are you, O Israel; who is like unto you?" He considered the nation to be incomparably favored and, therefore, enquired in astonishment, "Who is like unto you?" He had seen Egypt with all its wisdom and its wealth—and the desert tribes in all their rustic simplicity—and doubtless he knew the condition of most of the nations under Heaven. But having his eyes upon them all, he, nevertheless, looks upon the chosen race which God had brought up out of Egypt and he says, "Who is like unto you?"

Beloved, you who are in Christ are favored by God beyond all others! None in the whole universe are so happily placed as you are—"you are a chosen generation, a peculiar people." If you have been born again and saved, you are the pick and choice of all God's creatures and He has indulged you with a measure of love and kindness such as He has shown to none else! I address Believers as a body and I ask you, would you change your estate with the rich of this world? Would you barter Grace for gain? Surely not! There is much that is comfortable connected with the possession of wealth, but if you look at the opulent, as such, there is no reason to believe that they are the possessors of any great amount of happiness.

Gold cannot lighten the heavy heart or cool the burning brow—far more often it cankers the soul and lies like a weight upon the spirit. It is a heavy metal and has weighed many down to Hell. You, even though you are the poor of the flock, the despised and rejected of men—you are a people infinitely favored beyond those who possess the treasures of this fleeting world! Select even a company of princes and let them stand before you in all their pomp, half worshipped by their subjects, but they will not excite your envy, for, "uneasy lies the head that wears a crown," and those who climb to the high places of the earth commonly confess that there is little peace of mind to be found there. You who believe in Jesus are kings of a nobler sort, already, and enjoy honors and blessings which emperors might covet!

You reign in Christ after a far higher manner than princes and emperors, for you rule in a superior realm, since the spiritual far exceeds the material. Who is like unto you, O Believer, among the mighty ones of the earth? The Lord Jehovah is your strength and your song, your portion and your praise, your comfort and your crown! Turn, if you will, to those who are famous for knowledge, men of skill, wit and research, yet among these there are none to be found comparable in happiness to Christians! To know yourself forgiven, to know yourself eternally saved, to know yourself ordained unto *eternal life*—to be assured that you will enjoy unspeakable bliss when yonder sun turns to a coal and the moon is black as sackcloth of hair—to know all this is to be unspeakably favored! The utmost learning cannot compare with it.

Nor if you take the sons of pleasure with their wine and their music and their sensual joys, can you find any rivals for our happiness. Solomon

tells us concerning laughter that it is mad and sums up all *earthly* joy with—“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” Our consecrated pleasures are not such! Our holy joy has no delusion in it. It is solid and real and can never be taken from us and, therefore, those who possess it are a people unparalleled for blessedness! Wealth, rank, learning, fame, pleasure and all else that man holds dear, we would gladly renounce for the joy of our Lord! He has satisfied us with favor and filled us to the brim with content now that He has given us Himself for our portion. Blessed are our very dwellings and the beds we lie upon and the tables at which we sit. “How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, and your tabernacles, O Israel!”

Am I speaking to some Believers who are not enjoying this happiness? Is it not strange that men should be in a position which angels might envy and yet they fail to realize their blessed estate? Just as some men with thousands a year will live like paupers, so are there others who, with a boundless income of eternal love at their disposal, nevertheless starve their souls with small delights. Just think for a minute, O downcast Believers, of this singular fact and chide yourselves into a more joyful frame of mind. There was a time when you would have given your eyes to be what you now are! Do you remember when sin lay heavy on your conscience and a dread of death and Hell brooded over you? What would you have given, then, to have been able to say, “By Grace I am forgiven”?

You know you used to envy the very least and poorest and most afflicted of God’s saints in those days! And you were apt to think that if you could lie in a dungeon and be fed on bread and water all your life, yet if you could but once get rid of the burden of sin, you would never murmur again! Yet here you are, accepted in the Beloved and conscious of being adopted into the family of Heaven—and for all that your joy is at a low ebb! Should it be so? Do you remember, also, the time of your espousals, the season of your first love? Why, in those days you wondered how a Christian could be unhappy! As for yourself, you were so full of intense delight that when you heard some older Christian lamenting over anxiety, doubt, fear and the like, you looked at him as a prodigy—you could not comprehend his speaking after that fashion!

You felt that to say, “My Beloved is mine and I am His,” was the very *essence* of Heaven to you and you could not make out how a man could be an heir of Glory and not be as overflowing with delight as you were! Therefore, I say, chide yourself to think that you should have fallen from your eminency and come away from those sweet delights. Beloved, if we are not as happy as the days are long in these summer months, it is entirely our own fault, for there is plenty of reason for being so! Come, Christians, why are you cast down? Why are you so disquieted? Have you forgotten your redemption, forgotten your adoption, forgotten your justification and forgotten your safety in Christ?

Have you not, also, somewhat neglected to survey your hopes? What if you have little of this world? Look at what is laid up in store for you hereafter! Within a few years, at the outside, you are to be with the angels where no dust of toil shall ever stain your garments! Where no sweat of labor shall stand upon your brow! Where no care shall scourge the heart

and no sorrow dim the eyes! Grief, loss, bereavement, or need shall never approach you there! You are of the imperial blood and you are soon to be acknowledged as a peer of Heaven's own realm! The day of your accession to sacred honors hastens on. It may be but a week or two that the bliss will tarry—even a few hours may be the only interval and we shall stand beatified among the perfected ones who see God's face without a veil between!

We have every reason to be happy and if we are not so, it must be because we fail to remember the privileges which our Lord has bestowed upon us. Let me stir you up, my Brothers and Sisters, to happiness this morning—

***“Why should the children of a King
Go mourning all their days?
Come, cease to groan, and loudly sing
A Psalm of gladsome praise.”***

What a blessed task is mine—to urge my Brothers and Sisters to be happy! How highly favored are you to be exhorted to so delicious a privilege! When happiness becomes a *duty*, who will not be glad? What a blessed people are they to whom to be delighted is but to obey the Divine command to rejoice in the Lord—an obligation as well as a privilege! My Brethren, I would urge you to rejoice, this morning, because if you are, indeed, believers in Christ, you are “a people saved by the Lord.”

If you only read as far as the word, “saved,” and there pause, what music there is in the words—“a people *saved*”! Not a people who *may* be saved, who are in *process* of being saved, but a people *saved*! He that believes in Jesus is saved! The work is done. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” “Unto us who are saved,” says the Apostle, not speaking of salvation as a future gift, but as a deed accomplished! It is ours at this very moment, for in Christ Jesus we are “a people saved.”

The Israelites were saved from Pharaoh's domination. With a high hand and an outstretched arm did Jehovah bring them forth, even as at this day you and I are saved from the reigning power of sin. We are no longer held spell-bound by Satan so that we cannot bestir ourselves and seek after holiness. We are saved from the bondage of evil, even from the iron furnace of our ruling passions. The Israelites were saved, also, from the destroying angel. On that night when the avenger flew through the land and smote all the firstborn of Egypt, the blood mark on the lintel saved the families of Israel and even so are we saved by the precious blood of Christ! No angel of vengeance can smite the man who is sheltered beneath the atoning blood! He shall feast securely when Egypt sends up her mighty cry.

The chosen tribes were saved when Pharaoh pursued them and his hosts overtook them at the sea, even at the Red Sea. Then came the fiery cloudy pillar between Israel and Egypt, brightness to Israel but darkness to their foes! They could not come near them all that night and in the morning Israel was safe, for the Lord's redeemed marched on foot through the Red Sea and saw their enemies no more—they were drowned in the midst of the sea—for God had saved His people! Even so has He saved us

from being overtaken and overthrown by temptation. He has rescued us from the renewed attacks of the old, corrupt Nature combined with the cunning of Satan—He has saved us up to this hour from besetting sin and its fierce pursuits!

When the people came into the wilderness they thought they were to perish of thirst, but He saved them by bidding the crystal stream leap from the Rock! They were ready to die of hunger, but He saved them, for the manna fell from Heaven round about their camp! They were attacked by Amalek when they were weary, but He saved them, for Joshua's sword and Moses' outstretched hands brought victory for them till their foes were utterly defeated. Israel knew what it was to be saved in many ways—and so do we. We have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, fed with the Bread of Heaven and made to drink of water from the Rock of Ages. And as for our adversaries, they have not been able to harm us, for the Lord has saved us unto this day.

Mark the emphasis which Moses puts here, "A people saved by the Lord." You and I know that if we are saved, at all, it is of the Lord! We cannot talk of *merit*. We abhor the very word! Nor dare we attribute our salvation to our own free will—*Free Grace* must wear the crown if ever we are saved! I think, Brothers and Sisters, what a blessing it is to have a salvation which is altogether Divine! If you had saved yourself, that poor work of yours would, like all man's work, one day pass away! But salvation is of the Lord and, therefore, it will stand forever! It is God that appointed and arranged it, even the Father who is the God of our election, it is Jesus who worked it out, even the Son who is the God of our redemption! And it is the Holy Spirit who applies it, even the Holy Spirit, who is the God of our regeneration and our sanctification.

The Triune God has worked all our works in us and for us, glory be to His name! "Who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord?" I wish I could speak as I feel this morning—I would fire your hearts with enthusiasm towards Him who loved you before the earth was—who, having chosen you, purchased you with an immense price, brought you out from among the rest of mankind by His power, separated you unto Himself to be His people forever and who now loves you with a love that will never weary nor grow cold, but will bring you unto Himself and seat you at His right hand forever and ever! You are saved! Remember that, O Believer!

You are not half-saved, but completely saved! You are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation! You shall not be ashamed nor confused, world without end! Why, that one word, "saved," is enough to make the heart dance as long as life remains. "Saved!" Let us hang out our banners and set the bells ringing. Saved! What a sweet sound it is to the man who is wrecked and sees the vessel going down and at that moment discovers that the lifeboat is near and will rescue him from the sinking ship. To be snatched from the devouring fire, or saved from fierce disease just when the turning point has come and death appears imminent—these, also, are occasions for crying, "Saved!" But to be rescued from *sin* and *Hell* is a greater salvation, still, and demands a louder joy! We will sing it in life

and whisper it in death and chant it throughout eternity—saved by the Lord! “Happy, indeed, are you, O Israel”!

Another source of joy for the Israelite is found in the grand Truth of God that the Lord’s Beloved are, also, shielded by God—“who is the shield of your help.” God’s people are a warring people and yet a happy people, for though dangers surround them, Omnipotence preserves them! No sooner are we saved than we have to contend with foes. Now, these foes are very good at warfare and ready to smite us even to the death. Therefore the necessity for this blessed word, “The shield of your help.” The sword shall be lifted against you, but God, Himself, will interpose between you and that sword! The arrows shall fly winged with malicious design, but God shall hold His sacred protection over you and protect you from even the *thought* of harm! He is “the shield of your help.” Think of this and rejoice!

Many evils would injure you and even destroy you, if they could, but Jehovah Jesus interposes between you and them—

***“Many times since days of youth,
May Israel truly say,
Foes devoid of love and truth
Afflict me day by day.
Yet they never can prevail,
God defends His people still!
Jesus’ power can never fail
To save from all that’s ill.”***

See how the Lord our God has interposed, already, on innumerable occasions. We have been laid low by sickness, but it has worked our spiritual health. We have experienced losses, but we have been enriched by them in the highest sense. We have even endured calumny, but our character is still as bright as ever through the gracious protection of our God. We have been assailed by temptation, but the evil influence did not enter our spirit, so as to pollute it, for just then Divine Grace came in to prevent our yielding to the vile suggestion. We have been the subjects of much doubt and skepticism, but always, when these have flown at us like vultures, God, Himself, in infinite love, has turned aside their fierce attacks.

We have been preserved in Christ Jesus, for He is our shield. We have been strengthened by Him, for He is our help. And being helped, we have escaped every assault, for He is our help and our shield. Brothers and Sisters, you shall be shielded throughout the entire battle of life. If all the quivers of Hell are to be emptied out against you, behold, the Lord God is your salvation! You may trust and not be afraid, for the Lord says to each one of His chosen, even as unto Abraham, “Fear not, I am your shield and your exceedingly great reward.” This, also, is true today. As you have been protected, so are you now shielded by the Lord. Your present troubles are only like a shower rattling upon the window pane—you shall not so much as be dampened by them.

Your adversaries appear to be let loose against you, but their fiery darts will stop short upon that wondrous shield of God which will blunt their points. “Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength.” “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper

and every tongue that rises against you in judgment you shall condemn.” “He shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust. His truth shall be your shield and buckler.” Will you not be happy after that? As you cower down beneath those mighty wings, even as the little chickens shelter under the hen, are you not happy? As you hide behind that mighty shield, do you not feel restful and content? If not, pray that you may be, for so you ought to be!

Besides defensive armor we need offensive weapons and we ought to be happy, in the next place, because we are divinely armed—“Who is the sword of your excellency!” This wondrous Word of God, when blessed by the Holy Spirit, is our sword with which to fight the battles of life! Does sin invade us? The precept smites it and the story of Calvary slays it! Does the flesh rebel? The Word of God smites the flesh and helps us to mortify it! Does Satan come against us? With, “It is written,” we meet him as our Master met him in the wilderness of old! There is no weapon like the Word of God! This is the true Jerusalem blade that will cut through bone and marrow! It has never been known to bend or break, yet, in the hour of conflict. Take good heed that you have it by you. Gird it on your thigh and wield it well, for victory always goes with it.

We are armed with the Word of God, not only that we may smite our own spiritual foes, but that we may win men for Christ. As the Israelites had to conquer Canaan, so have we to conquer the *world* for Jesus! Go up against the ramparts of error! Go up against the hosts of evil with no weapon in your hand but the story of the Cross, the Revelation of the Most High, the declaration of the Gospel of Jesus—for by this sign we conquer—it is impossible that we should fail with the Gospel in our hands. How happy God’s people ought to be when they think of this! Armed with an invincible weapon, ought we not to rejoice in anticipation of victory?

A man who has a Bible of his own—I mean not the paper and the letterpress, but all that is in the Inspired Volume—is there anything more that he can desire? He finds, from Genesis to Revelation, every promise his, every dear assurance of almighty power and love all his own—what more does he need? He who can use this two-edged sword may defy doubt, fear, anxiety, care, temptation, worldliness—yes, death and the devil! At the very sight of this sword our adversaries tremble, for it cuts through joints and marrow and leaves a deadly wound wherever it cuts. Be happy, Christian! May the Lord help you to be happy as you see this sword of the Spirit to be yours.

The fourth thing which is mentioned as a great privilege is that we have security of victory—“Your enemies shall be found liars unto you.” Now I ask any Christian of experience here whether he has not found this true? What a shameless liar the devil is! “Ah,” he says, “in this trouble the hand of the Lord has gone out against you! He has forsaken you and He will be gracious no more. He has deserted you as He did Saul the king, and from now on dark and brooding thoughts will overshadow you which no musician’s hand shall be able to charm away. The Lord will no more answer you from His holy oracle, for behold, He has cast you away!”

But, Brothers and Sisters, we are not deserted, after all, for here we are, this morning, to sing of Divine loving kindness and to tell of all our past troubles as trials and proofs of eternal faithfulness! We are not in the asylum, nor the prison, though the arch-enemy has threatened us with the one or the other. God has enabled us to triumph over all difficulties, though the enemy has predicted our utter defeat. The devil came to us once, and he said, “Now you will assuredly fall! Already your heart is beginning to go back to sin. You are not faithful. You have been treacherous in your inmost thoughts and you will apostatize, altogether, and bring great disgrace upon your profession. You are a fool to have ever joined the Church—there is no stability about you. You are a mere flash in the pan. You blazed like a firebrand, but you will die out into black ashes.”

But, Beloved, we have not died out yet, blessed be Jehovah’s name! Year after year has passed and the faint are still pursuing, the feeble still hold on their way and utter weakness still triumphs over strong temptations! Satan has been a liar to us and so has that wicked unbelief of ours, which is rather worse than the devil, for, at any rate, it has less excuse for its existence. Unbelief has whispered a thousand accursed falsehoods in our ears—this labor was to be too difficult, that trial was to consume us—that adversary would swallow us up! Nothing of the kind has happened, but so our enemies said and they have all been liars! What fools we were to have believed them and what greater fools we shall be if, in days to come, we shall lend an ear to them. Let us not listen to anything which opposes itself to the sure Truth of God.

He cannot forsake us. Leave His chosen to perish? Cast away the people whom He foreknew? Renounce the purchase of His blood, the darlings of His heart? Impossible! He may sooner cease to be than cease to be the Father of His own-begotten! He may sooner quench the sun and moon, and bid the whole universe pass away as the sere leaves fall from the forest trees, than He can ever say unto His children, “I have loved you, but not now. I have chosen you, but have cast you away. I have brought you thus far to put you to shame.” No, Beloved, His mercy endures forever and never does He turn from His Covenant! What a God you have to deal with! There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun!

In the chapter from which our text is taken we see a singular God and a singular people. There is none like Jehovah and none like His people. He is blessed forever and they are blessed forever in Him and by Him. Therefore let us be happy this morning! O you mourners, take down your harps from the willows and tune them afresh! Put away the sackbut and take the dulcimer and upon an instrument of ten strings praise the Lord. Let your heart be glad in His name and rejoice, yes, exceedingly rejoice!

II. Secondly and briefly, LET US CONSIDER THE RESULT OF REALIZING OUR BLESSED ESTATE. Upon this subject there ought to be no need to dilate, for each heir of Heaven should live in the hourly enjoyment of his Divine inheritance, but, alas, few are doing so! Surely spiritual blessings are the only ones which men decline to enjoy! Bring a thirsty man near a brimming cup and see how long he will linger. See how he hastens to enjoy the draught! Bring a poor man near an estate and tell him that he

has but to sue the court to gain it and tomorrow morning he will be asking where he has to go! Alas, Christian people seem to be stupid about their privileges! They are not so wise as the ass which knows its master's crib. They have great blessings, but they do not always enjoy them. The good which the Lord provides is set before them, but they do not grasp it as they should. May the Holy Spirit teach us wisdom!

Now, there are many reasons why you should enjoy your privileges and be happy. The first is because it tends to keep our allegiance to God unshaken. Israel would never seek after another god while she knew that none could bless her as Jehovah had done! Those who were happy with Jehovah would not be likely to wander off to Baal. God's people will not go astray from Him when their hearts are thoroughly happy with Him. It is because you lose the sweet flavor of the waters of the flowing fountain that you dabble in those muddy, stagnant gatherings which linger in the broken cisterns. If you would delight yourself in the Lord, all the world could not tempt you from Him.

A man will never be dazzled with gold who has his heart satiated with God. Unhappy Christians, when tempted, are very apt to seek pleasure away from the Lord. But those who rejoice in the Lord always shall find the joy of the Lord to be their strength, for it shall be cords of love and bands of a man to hold them fast to their King. When your joy begins to slacken, say to yourself, "There is something wrong here. I must get back to where I was in my earlier days. I must return to my God and to the sunlight, for now that I am in the cold shade, my love may soon cool." Beloved, if you will be happy, it will create warm enthusiasm and a grateful love within your bosom.

Have you begun to be lukewarm? Has your heart declined in affection? Nothing can make your soul return to its first love like the Lord's return and the restoration of the old happiness. Yes, I am saved. Yes, I am shielded. Yes, I bear His sword with which to smite my foes. Yes, I shall triumph through the blood of the Lamb and there is a portion for me at His right hand. Well, then, the next thought is therefore blessed be His dear name, I do love Him! I thought I did not, but when I begin to see what He has done for me and what He has given me and provided for me, I find my sluggish heart beating at a quicker rate—

***"Yes, I love Him and adore,
Oh for Grace to love Him more."***

That is a good result to come of being happy. "Therefore comfort you, comfort you My people, says the Lord; speak you comfortably unto Jerusalem."

Joy, also, will have another effect. It will give you confidence to expect other blessings. Because God has dealt so well with us in the past, we are persuaded that goodness and mercy will follow us all our days. If now, today, Beloved, you will survey the goodness of God to you in the past, you will feel confidence that when new troubles arise you will be helped in them and when new mercies are needed, they shall be supplied, "new every morning." Gratitude for the past inspires us with courage for the future. And so, too, you will gain strength for bearing all your burdens and

courage for facing all your enemies. Has the Lord done so much to make us happy? Then He will not deny us anything! He who has given us so much, already, will be sure to sustain us and supply our needs out of His all-sufficiency until we have trampled down every foe and shall rest forever at His right hand.

Lastly, for Christians to be happy is one of the surest ways to set them seeking the salvation of others. If we found religion to be a bondage and a deception, we should be inhuman if we wished to introduce others to it. He who enters upon a tyrant's service, with little food and no pay and much misery, ought not to stand at the door and invite others to come in! He should, rather, warn them to seek some happier service. Now, we have found religion to be true happiness. I am sure I speak the sentiments of all here who know the Lord when I say that if we have not been perfectly happy it has not been the fault of God's Grace, but entirely our own, for had we lived up to our calling and our privileges we should have been as happy as the birds of the air and our lives would have been one perpetual song!

Despite our shortcomings, blessed be God, we have been supremely happy. If we could begin life again we would only ask to begin it with Jesus, by the power of His Spirit. If we had our choice of all the various positions and conditions of our fellow men, we do not know one that we prefer to our own, so long as we can say, "Christ is mine." Because we have found this honey, we desire our friends and kinsfolk to partake of it. Oh, my Hearers, I would you were all happy! I would you were, every one of you, supremely happy! And especially I wish it for some of you into whose faces I have looked these many years and see that you are still not clear of your anxieties. I see that you are not sure about your souls yet, and you still hesitate and linger in the border land.

O come and rest where God has provided rest for sinners' souls! Beloved, trust in Jesus Christ this morning! Make no more delay! May His Divine Spirit enable you to do so—then shall your peace be like a river and you shall confess that we did not deceive you. You will cry, "The half has not been told me," when you perceive the deep peace, the holy calm, the blessed restfulness and sometimes the ecstatic, overflowing delight which is the portion of the child of God! If I had to die like a dog and there were no hereafter, I would still choose to be a Christian, for of all lives that can be lived there is none that can compare with this! We drink the wine on the lees well-refined and are satisfied with marrow and with fatness!

But as for worldlings, they desire the husks that swine eat, with which their bellies cannot be filled. The Lord grant His people Grace to be happy in Him and may He also bring in the wanderers, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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THE DEATH OF MOSES

NO. 1966

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 5, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab,
according to the Word of the Lord.”
Deuteronomy 34:5.***

WHAT an honorable title! Moses is distinguished as “*the servant of Jehovah.*” He was this of choice, for he willed to be the servant of God rather than to be great in the land of the Pharaohs. Such he was most perseveringly throughout the whole of his life. Such he was most intensely, for he waited upon God for his directions, as a servant waits upon his master, and he endeavored to do all things according to the pattern which was shown him in the holy mountain. Though he was king in Jeshurun, he never acted on his own authority, but was the lowly instrument of the Divine will. Moses was faithful to God in all his house, as a *servant*. You neither see him overstepping his office nor neglecting it. His reverence for the Lord’s name was deep, his devotion to the Lord’s cause was complete and his confidence in the Lord’s Word was constant. He was a true servant of God from the time when he was appointed at the burning bush until the hour when he surrendered his keys of office to his successor and climbed the appointed mountain to die. Oh that you and I may so live as to prove ourselves servants of God!

Unto as many as have received Him, our Lord Jesus has given power to become the sons of God and this is our great joy! But as sons we aspire to serve our Father, even as His great first-born Son has done, who took upon Himself the form of a Servant that He might accomplish His Father’s good pleasure for His Church. Let us with good will do service unto our Father who is in Heaven, seeing it is but our reasonable service that we should lay out ourselves for Him who has made us His sons and daughters. Redeemed from the slavery of sin, let us, as the Lord’s freemen, cry unto Him henceforth, “O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds.”

But servant of God as Moses was, *he must die*. It is the common lot of men. Only two have passed out of this world into the abodes of Glory without fording the stream of death. Moses is not one of the two. Even had he crossed the Jordan into Canaan, he would, in due course, have died in the land. We might have expected that he would live on till the people were settled in Canaan, but it seemed right unto the Lord God that on account of his one slip he should die outside of the Promised Land, like the rest of the people. Only Caleb and Joshua, of all that generation who

came out of Egypt, were permitted to possess the land towards which they had journeyed for 40 years!

If that one offense lost Moses the privilege of entering the earthly Canaan, there may have been still more powerful reasons why he should not enter the heavenly Canaan without experiencing the change of death. He must not make a third with Enoch and Elijah, but he must die and be buried. Such will probably be our lot in due season. Brothers and Sisters, it may be that we shall not die—our Lord Jesus may come before we fall asleep—but if He does not come speedily, we shall find that it is appointed unto all men once to die. We shall pass from this world unto the Father by that common road which is beaten hard by the innumerable feet of mortal men. Since we must die, it is well to meditate upon the solemn future. Moses shall be our teacher in the art of dying. We will consider his decease in the hope that our fears may be removed and our desires may be excited. There is a Pisgah where we must yield up the ghost and be gathered to our fathers—may we climb to it as willingly as did Moses, the servant of God!

The manner of Moses' death is exceedingly remarkable. I suppose that no subject presents a finer field for oratory than the sublime decease of the Prophet, but we have nothing to do with oratory—our objective is spiritual and practical profit. Poets might well expend their noblest powers in depicting this strange scene of the man of God alone on the mountain's brow, with the view of Canaan at his feet and himself in holy rapture passing away into the eternal state. We are not poets, but simple Believers, desiring to learn some holy lesson from the death of one who, though the greatest of men, knew no higher honor than to be the *servant* of the Lord! Oh that the Spirit of Grace and Truth who has come to us by Christ Jesus may help us find instruction in the death of him who brought the Law from the mouth of God to men!

I. We are told in the text that, "Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, according to the Word of the Lord." This I shall read, first, as meaning that Moses died on Pisgah ACCORDING TO THE WARNING OF THE LORD.

His death was long foreseen. Moses knew some time before that he must die without setting foot in Canaan. Read in the first chapter of Deuteronomy his own account of the sin of the people at Meribah and the Lord's sentence, then and there pronounced—"Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I swore to give unto your fathers, save Caleb, the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he has trodden upon, and to his children, because he has wholly followed the Lord." "Also," adds Moses, "the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, saying, You also shall not go in there."

His death outside of the Promised Land did not come upon him at all as a surprise. He had to see his sister, Miriam, first of the great trio, fall asleep and, next, he was called to go up to Mount Hor and disrobe his brother, Aaron, of his priestly garments which he placed upon Eleazar, his son. Moses also had to see the whole of the generation that came out of Egypt with him buried in the wilderness. The 90th Psalm is his and it is a

sort of a Death March—fit hymn for a nation whose track was marked by countless graves. Because of unbelief “their carcasses fell in the wilderness.” Only Caleb and Joshua remained, the sole survivors of the great host which crossed the Red Sea. The Great Lawgiver had thus abundant pledges of his own departure and he must have had, in his brother’s death, a rehearsal of his own. Have not we, also, had many warnings? Are we ready?

Concerning his death in the land of Moab, it is natural to remark that *it was exceedingly disappointing*. He had been, for 40 years, engaged in leading the people to the land of promise—must he die when that country was within a day’s march? It was his life’s work for which he had been prepared by 40 years in Egypt, where he became learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians—and by another 40 years in the solitary wilderness where he kept sheep and held high fellowship with God. His third 40 years had been spent in freeing Israel from Egypt, training them to become a nation and conducting them to the land of promise—must he now expire before the nation entered in? What years his had been! What a life was that of Moses! How glorious was the man who had confronted Pharaoh and broken the pride of Egypt! How tried and troubled a man had he been while called to carry all that nation in his bosom and care for them as a shepherd cares for his sheep! His was a task that well-near broke him down and, had not the man Moses been made very meek by the indwelling Spirit of the Lord, and had he not also been graciously sustained by fellowship with God, his task had proven too heavy even for him.

Yet, after all that toil in fashioning a nation, he must die before the long-expected conquest! It was a bitter disappointment when first the sentence pierced his heart. He had known one great disappointment before, for Stephen tells us, that when he smote the Egyptian, “he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God, by his hand, would deliver them: but they understood not.” Then, when his brethren had refused him, he fled into the land of Midian, a rejected leader, a patriot whose heroism had only brought forth from his countrymen the contemptuous question, “Who made you a prince and a judge over us?” But this denial of entrance into Canaan was still a greater disappointment! To have toiled so long and to reap no harvest. To see the land, but not to enter it. To bring the tribes to the Jordan’s brink—and then to die in Moab after all—it was a grievous disappointment. Brothers and Sisters, are we ready to say as to our most cherished hope, “Your will be done”? Are we holding our life’s dearest purpose with a loose hand? It will be our wisdom to do so.

Apparently it was a severe chastisement. His offense was but one, but it excluded him from Canaan. We have not time to describe in detail the sin of Moses. It would appear to have been a sin of unbelief occasioned by his feeling so intensely for and with the people. Moses was thoroughly knit to Israel. When they sinned, he interceded as for himself. When Jehovah made him the offer that He would make of him a great nation, he declined it solely from his love for Israel. He lived for the nation and for the nation he died. Remember how once he went so far as to say, “If not, blot me, I pray You, out of Your Book which You have written.” In every way he was of the people, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. Israel was hidden

in his heart and out of that master passion of sympathy with the people came the weakness which, at last, made him speak unadvisedly with his lips. They strove with God and though Moses never yielded a point to them in that willed contest, yet their unbelief so far influenced him that he spoke in anger and said, "Hear now, you rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?"

Then "the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron, Because you believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (Num 20:12). Three times in the Book of Deuteronomy Moses tells the people, "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes." It was not so much that which Moses did *personally* which involved him in judgment, but he suffered because of his being mixed up with Israel! As the Lord had, before, spared the people for Moses' sake, it became necessary that, when he in any measure shared in their great sin of unbelief, he should be chastened for their sake as well as his own. His faith had saved them and now his unbelief, being backed by theirs, secures for him the sentence of exclusion from the land.

My Brothers and Sisters, when I think of this severity of discipline towards so faithful a servant as Moses, I do exceedingly fear and quake! Truly, "the Lord our God is a jealous God." We are sure that He is never unjust. We are sure that He is never unduly severe. We do not, for a moment, impugn the righteousness or even the love of our God in this or any other act, but He is terrible out of His holy places. How true it is that He will be sanctified in them that come near to Him! Behold and wonder! That highly-favored servant, Moses, though always accepted in the economy of Grace, yet must he come under the rule of the house and feel the chastising hand if he transgresses! Hence the sentence of exclusion is passed. As he had once joined that unbelieving generation by manifesting a measure of hasty unbelief, he must now share their doom and die on Moab's side of Jordan. "Righteous are You, O Lord, and upright are Your judgments." Oh for Grace to behave ourselves aright in Your house! Lord, teach us Your statutes and keep us in Your way.

Beloved, *it seemed a great calamity* that Moses must die when he did. He was an aged man as to years, but not as to condition. It is true he was 120 years old, but his father and his grandfather and his great grandfather had all lived beyond that age—two of them reaching 127—so that he might naturally have expected a longer lease of life. This truly grand old man had not failed in any respect. His eyes were not dim, neither had his natural force abated and, therefore, he might have expected to live on. Besides, it seems a painful thing for a man to die while he was capable of so much work—when, indeed, he was more mature, more gracious, more wise than ever! The mental and spiritual powers of Moses were greater in the latter days of his life than ever before. Notice his wonderful song! Observe his marvelous address to the people! He was in the prime of his mental manhood! He had been tutored by a long experience, chastened by a marvelous discipline and elevated by a sublime communion with God—and yet he must die. How strange that when a man seems most fit to live,

it is then that the mandate comes, "Get you up into the mountain and die"!

Naturally speaking, it seemed a sad loss for the people of Israel. Who but Moses could rule them? Even he could scarcely control them! They were a heavy burden, even to his meekness—who else could so successfully act as king in Jeshurun? Without Moses to awe them, what will not these rebels do? It was a grave experiment to place a younger and an inferior man in the seat of power when the nation was entering upon its great campaign. It would need all the faith and discretion of Moses to conduct the conquest of the country and to divide their portions to the tribes. Yet so it must be—precious as his life was, the Word of God went forth, "Get you up into the top of Pisgah: for you shall not go over this Jordan." Even thus to the best and most useful must the summons come. Who would wish to forbid the Lord to call home His own when He wills?

The sentence was *not to be averted by prayer*. Moses tells us that he besought the Lord at that time, "O Lord God, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your mighty hand: for what God is there in Heaven or in earth that can do according to Your works and according to Your might? I pray You, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon." This was altogether a very proper prayer. He did not plead his own services, but he urged the former mercies of the Lord. Surely this was good pleading and he might have hoped to prevail for himself, seeing he had formerly been heard for a whole nation. But no. This blessing must be denied him. The Lord said, "Let it suffice you; speak no more unto Me of this matter." Moses never again opened his lips upon the subject. He did not beseech the Lord thrice, as Paul did, in his hour of trouble, but seeing that the sentence was final, he bowed his head in holy consent.

Brethren, he had often asked a greater thing than this of the Lord, his God! Once he had even dared to say, "I beseech You, show me Your Glory," and he was heard even in that high request. The Lord placed him in the cleft of the rock and made all His goodness pass before him. Yet now he begs for a comparatively small thing—and it is refused. What a mercy that it is in the small things of this life that our requests may be denied, but in the things which touch the Kingdom of the Lord, our prayer never returns empty! All Heaven is open to our bended knee, though for wise ends and purposes a Canaan on earth may be closed against us. All-sufficient Grace was given though the thorn was not removed—Moses, the servant of the Lord, died, but triumphed over death!

When I thought of the trial of Moses in being shut out of the land, I found myself unable to read the chapter which lay open before me, for I was blinded by my tears. How shall any of us stand before a God so holy? Where Moses errs how shall *we* be faultless? Never servant more favored of his Lord and yet even *he* must undergo a disappointment so great as a rebuke for a single fault. The flower of his life is broken off from the stalk for *one* act of unbelief. To be exalted so near to God is to be involved in a great responsibility. A fierce light beats about the Throne of God. He that is the King's chosen, admitted to continual communion with Him, must stand in awe of Him. Well is it written, "Serve the Lord with fear and re-

joyce with trembling.” An offense which might be passed over as a mere trifle in an ordinary subject would be very serious in a prince of the blood who had been favored with royal secrets and had been permitted to lean his head upon the bosom of the King.

If we live near to God we cannot sin without incurring sharp rebukes. Even the common run of the elect must remember those Words of God, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” Much more must the elect out of the elect hear such a warning! God did, in effect, say to Moses, “You, only, have I chosen of all mankind to speak with Me face to face and, therefore, since you have failed in your faith after such communion with Me, it behooves Me, in very faithfulness and love towards you, to mark your failure with an evident token of displeasure.” The discipline of saints is in this life. I doubt not but many a man’s life has come to an end when he wished it to be continued and he has missed that which he has strived for because of an offense against the Lord committed in his earlier years. We had need walk carefully before our jealous God, who will not spare sin anywhere and, least of all, in His own beloved. His love to them never fails, but His hatred of their sin burns like coals of juniper. Foolish parents spare the rod, but our wise Father acts not so! Walk circumspectly, O you heirs of eternal life, for, “even our God is a consuming fire.” The Lord give us to feel the sanctifying power of this passage in the story of the great Lawgiver!

II. But now I have to conduct you to a second point of view. Moses, the man of God, died in the land of Moab “according to the Word of the Lord,” that is, ACCORDING TO THE DIVINE APPOINTMENT.

All the details of the death of Moses had been ordered of the Lord. Time, place and circumstances were arranged by God. So, Brothers and Sisters, it is appointed unto us *where* we shall die and *when* we shall die. We speak of certain persons as having “died by accident” and we sometimes bewail the deaths of Christian men as premature—but in the deepest sense it is not so! God has marked out for us the *place* where and the *time* when we must resign our breath. Let this suffice us. That which is of Divine appointment should be to our contentment. We do not believe in the *Kismet* of blind fate, but we believe in the *predestination* of Infinite Wisdom and, therefore, we say, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him.”

Moses died according to the Divine appointment, that is also *according to an appointment which is very general among God’s people*. He died without seeing the full result of his life-work. If you look down the list of the servants of God, you will find that the most of them die before the objective which they had in view is fully accomplished. It is true that we are immortal till our work is done, but then we usually think that our work is something other than it is. It never was the work of Moses to lead Israel into the Promised Land! It was his *wish*, but not his work. His work he saw, but his wish he saw not. Moses really did finish his own proper work, but the desire of his heart was to have seen the people settled in their land and this was not granted him. Thus David gathered together gold

and silver with which to build the Temple, but he was not to build it. Solomon, his son, undertook the work.

Even thus, great Reformers rise and speak the Truth of God and cause colossal systems of error to tremble, but they do not, themselves, utterly destroy those evils. Their successors continue the work. Most men have to sow that others may reap. The prayer of Moses is fulfilled to others as well as to himself—"Let Your work appear unto Your servants and Your Glory unto their children." We must not hope to engross all things. Let us be content to do our own part in laying the foundation upon which other men may build in due course. It is according to the Divine appointment which links us with each other that one plants and another waters, one brings out of Egypt and another leads into Canaan.

And I may here notice that Moses thus "died according to the Word of the Lord" *for a deep dispensational reason*. It was not for Moses to give the people rest, for the Law of God gives no man rest and brings no man to Heaven. The Law may bring us to the borders of the promise, but only Joshua or Jesus can bring us into Grace and Truth. If Moses had given them Canaan, the allegory would have seemed to teach us that rest might be obtained by the Law of God, but as Moses must be laid asleep and buried by Divine hands, so must the Law cease to rule so that the Covenant of Grace may lead us into the fullness of peace—

***"Moses may lead to Jordan's flood,
But there surrenders his command.
Our Joshua must the waves divide,
And bring us to the promised land.
Trained by the Law, we learn our place,
But gain the inheritance by Grace."***

Thus there was a mysterious reason why Moses should die in Moab, according to the eternal purpose of God. Not without such Divine decree shall any other of the servants of the Lord depart out of the camp of Israel. We also shall, in life and death, answer some gracious purpose of the Lord. Are we not glad to have it so? Yes, Lord, Your will be done!

III. I have conducted you a little out of the dark, now, and the sky is clearing around us. In the third place, Moses died ACCORDING TO THE LOVING WISDOM OF THE LORD. It was a meet thing, a wise thing and a kind thing that Moses should not go over Jordan.

First, by so doing *he preserved his identity with the people for whom he had cared*. For their sakes he had forsaken a principedom in Egypt and now, for their sakes, he loses a home in Palestine. He had suffered with them, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt," and he had been with them in all that great and terrible wilderness, afflicted in all their affliction, bearing and carrying them in God's name all his days—was it not meet that he should at last die *with* them? He had been, all along, the mirror of self-denial—neither for himself, nor his brother, nor his son had he sought honor—he lived only for others and never for himself. And his death was agreeable with his whole life, for he leads others to the border of Canaan, but enters it not, himself. He sleeps with the older nation. He ends his career on this side of Jordan, like all the generation which he had numbered when they came out from under the iron hand of the Egyptian tyrant. It seemed fit that one so iden-

tified with the people should say, "Where you die, I will die." Are not we satisfied to take our lot with the holy men and women who already sleep in Jesus?

Moreover, Moses might be well content to die then and there, since he was thus *released from all further trial*. Surely he had known enough of sorrow in connection with that rebellious nation! Forty years was enough for a pastorate over a people so fickle and perverse. Surely he must have blessed the hand that removed his shoulder from the burden! His was no life of luxury and ease, but of stern self-denial and perpetual provocation. What trial he endured! What self-restraint he exercised! What a lonely life he led! Are you surprised to hear me say that? With whom could he associate? Even Aaron, his brother, was a poor comrade for such a man! Remember how he failed Moses when that man of God was absent for 40 days upon the Mountain with God? It was Aaron that made the golden calf and this clearly proved his spiritual inferiority to Moses. The man of God had to watch even his brother who stood next to him! With whom could he take counsel? Who would talk with him as a friend? He dwelt apart and shone as a lone star.

It is significant that he died alone, for so had he lived. Aaron had tender attendants to disrobe him. He who put the vestments on most fitly aided to take them off, but the crown which Moses wore, God, Himself, had set upon his brow and no human hand must remove it. Surely this burdened watcher of Israel must have been glad when his watch was over! Surely this lonely man, after 120 years of service, must have felt it a happy release to be admitted to the glorious society of Heaven! As Noah was a preacher of righteousness for 120 years and then entered into the ark, so Moses, after 120 years of service, enters into his rest. Is it not well? Do you grieve that the battle is fought and the victory is won forever? We, also, in our deaths, shall find the end of toil and labor—and the rest will be glorious!

Remember, in the next place, that by his so dying he was *relieved from a fresh strain upon him* which would have been involved in the conquest of Canaan. He would have crossed the Jordan, not to enjoy the country, but to *fight* for it—was he not well out of so severe a struggle? You think of the clusters of Eshcol, but I am thinking of the sieges and the battles. Was it so very desirable to be there? Would Moses really have desired that dreadful fray? Was it not a gracious act on the part of the Commander-in-Chief to relieve from his command a veteran who had already served through 40 years of war? The Lord would not put upon Moses a burden so little agreeable to his age and to his turn of mind as that of executing the condemned Canaanites. Joshua was naturally a man of war—let him use the sword, for Moses was abler at the pen. Recollect that the people of Israel were no better when they reached Canaan than when they were in the wilderness—they suffered defeat through unbelief—and they missed much of their inheritance through self-indulgence. Moses had seen enough of them on one side Jordan, without being troubled with them on the other. The Lord, therefore, graciously took His servant off the active list, and promoted him to a higher sphere. Let us not be distressed by the fact that He will one day perform the like kindness to us in our turn.

“But,” you will say, “surely it might have been as well if Moses had lived to have seen Joshua win the country!” Would this have been desirable? Do active men find much delight in sitting still and seeing others take the lead? Moreover, had Moses lived, he would, before long, have felt those infirmities from which he had, for 120 years, been screened—is it so very desirable to survive one’s powers and to be a tottering old man amidst constant battles? Peace suits age—age agrees not with war’s alarms. Had Moses remained the leader of the people, he might have injured the glory of his former days. Have we not seen aged men survive their wisdom? Have not their friends wished that they had closed their career long before? Have we not seen pastors, once able and efficient, holding to their pulpits to the injury of the Churches they once edified? Oh that men would have wisdom enough not to undo, in their old age, what they have worked in their youth! Moses is removed before this evil can happen to him and it is well.

“But,” you say, “perhaps he might have been there to watch with joy the victories of Joshua.” Is that always an easy thing to one who has been in the front rank, himself? At least it is not an unmixed privilege—there is a mixture of trial in the blessing. Moses did not “lag superfluous on the stage.” He did not survive his work. Who wishes to do so? He passed away on the crest of the wave before any ebb had set in, or any weakness had been discoverable. He died so as to be missed. Israel wept for him and no man said that he had lived too long. That prayer of his, after all, was a mistake. What would have been the particular joy of merely treading the soil of Canaan? The land looked far more beautiful from Pisgah than it would have done had he stood by Jericho. Assuredly, at the present day, you and I who have never seen Palestine, have a much more delightful idea of it than those who have endured its noonday heats and midnight frosts! Moses had more joy in gazing upon it from above than in actually warring among its hills.

IV. I must hasten on to say that while the death of Moses thus exhibits the loving wisdom of God, the way in which he died abundantly displays THE GRACE OF GOD.

After Moses had been well assured that he must die, you *never hear a complaint of it*, nor even a prayer against it. Remember that he, himself, wrote the story and it is charming to see how he recorded his own fault, his prayer to be allowed entrance into Canaan and its denial. Had he murmured, he would also have recorded this. He seems to me always to write about Moses as if he were somebody he had known—he is strictly impartial in his praise or blame of himself. He calls himself, “king in Jeshurun.” He says that the man Moses was very meek and yet he records his outbursts of anger. No man was ever less self-conscious, or lived so little for himself as Moses did! Therefore, when once the Lord told him he must die, he acquiesced without a word.

Most fitly the old man immediately *called forth all his energies to finish his work*. You will find in the 31st chapter of the Book of Numbers that he took in hand a war—“And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterward shall you be gathered unto your people” (Num 31:1, 2). He would die warring with Israel’s adversaries

and obeying Israel's Lord. Certain ordinances to be observed in war he delivered to Eleazar and he supervised the division of the spoils. Fearing lest the tribes which had settled east of Jordan might excuse themselves from future labors, he stirred up Reuben and Gad, and gained from them a promise to go over armed with their brethren till the whole land was conquered.

Furthermore, he prepared his manuscripts, not for the press, but to be put away in the Ark and to be preserved. He would have his testimony to future generations complete before his hand was paralyzed by death. He knew that he was to die, but he did not sit down and weep, nor sulk, nor give himself up to bitter forebodings of the hour of departure. He served his God with increased vigor and was more than ever alive as life neared its close. Then he preached his best sermon. What a wonderful sermon it was! How he poured out his heart in pleading with the people! The sermon over, he began to sing. The swan is fabled to sing but once and that just before it dies.

So did Moses, at the last, give us that famous 90th Psalm, the song commencing, "Give ear, O you heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass. Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe you greatness unto our God." Moses had no time for poetry while his whole strength was needed in his government, but now he is about to die, his frame of mind is ecstatic—prose will not content him, he must weave his thoughts into verse. In fine, all the faculties of his manhood were drawn out to their utmost in a final effort to glorify the Lord, his God. Brothers and Sisters, is not this a fine fruit of Grace? Oh that we may bear it!

Then he gathered the tribes together and blessed them in prophetic words, pouring out his soul in benedictions. Having already cried to God about his successor, he laid his hands upon Joshua and charged him, encouraged him and bade the people help him in all his service.

He did all that remained to be done and *then went willingly to his end—*

***"Sweet was the journey to the sky,
The wondrous Prophet tried.
'Climb up the mount,' says God, 'and die.'
The Prophet climbed and died.
Softly his fainting head he lay
Upon his Maker's breast.
His Maker kissed his soul away,
And laid his flesh to rest."***

We, my Brothers, also expect to die. Let us not fear it, but let us awaken ourselves to labor more abundantly. Let us preach more boldly, let us sing more sweetly, let us pray more ardently. As flowers, before they shed their leaves, pour out all their perfumes, so let us pour out our souls unto the Lord! Let us live while we live! And dying, let us die unto the Lord! May our life-work close as the sun sets, looking greater when he sinks into the west than when he shines at full meridian height!

V. Now let us conclude by noticing, in the last place, that Moses died, “according to the Word of the Lord,” that is, ACCORDING TO THE DIVINE FAVOR.

His death leaves nothing to regret and neither is any desirable thing lacking. Failing to pass over Jordan seems a mere pin’s prick in presence of the honors which surrounded his departing hours. His death was the climax of his life. He now saw that he had fulfilled his destiny and was not as a pillar broken short. He was ordered to lead the people through the wilderness and he had done so. There they stood on the borders of their heritage—a people molded by his hands. By his instrumentality they were, so to speak, a regenerated race, far more fit than their fathers, to become a nation. The degrading results of long bondage had been shaken off in the free air of the desert. They were all young men, vigorous, hardy and ready for the fray. It is grand to pass away while there is nothing of infirmity yet seen, nothing left undone and nothing allowed to fail through too long persistence in office. We may say of Moses that he did—

***“His body with his charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live.”***

Moreover, his successor was appointed and was just below in the plain. It was not his son, but it was his servant who had become his son at last. He did not leave his flock to be scattered, his building to be thrown down. Happy Moses, to see his Joshua! Happy Elijah, to see his Elisha! No trembling, for the Ark of the Lord mars such a departure. The succession of workers lies with the *Master*, not with the workers! We are to train men, “who can also teach others”—but our own special work we must leave with the Lord. Yet as Paul was glad for Timothy, so must Moses have rejoiced over Joshua and felt, in his appointment, a release from care.

He died, moreover, in the best company possible. Some men expire most fitly in the presence of their children—their strength has laid in their domestic duties and affections and their children fitly close their eyes. But for the man, Moses, there was no true kindred. You hear that he married an Ethiopian woman, but you know nothing about her. You know that he had sons, but you do not hear a word about them except their names—their father was too engrossed in honoring his God to crave office for them! As we have seen, he lived as to men, alone, and as to men he died, alone. But *God* was with him and in the peculiarly near and dear society of God, he closed his life on the lone peak. If he suffered any weakness, no mortal eye beheld it. So far as his people were concerned, “he was not, for God took him.” Pisgah was to him the vestibule of Heaven. God met him at the gates of Paradise!

As he died, the sweetness of his last thought was indescribable. Before his strengthened eyes there lay the goodly land and Lebanon. The Lord showed him all the land of Gilead unto Daniel. Yonder is Carmel and beyond it he sees the gleam of the utmost sea. Through breaks of the mountains he sees Bethlehem and Jebus, which is Jerusalem. Then, like Abraham, he saw the Day of Christ—and by faith beheld the track of the Incarnate God! Your land, O Immanuel, appeared before him and he saw it in all its spiritual bearings. What a vision! Yet even this melted into a nobler view. As we have seen in our childhood by the light of the magic lan-

tern one view dissolve into another, so did the lower scene gradually melt away into another—and the servant of the Lord found himself removed from the shadows which his eyes had seen into the *realities* which eyes cannot behold! He had gone from Canaan below to Canaan above—and from the vision of Jerusalem on earth to the joy of the City of Peace in Glory!

The Rabbis say that our text means that Moses died at the mouth of God and that his soul was taken away by a kiss from the Lord's mouth. I do not know, but I have no doubt that there was more sweetness in the truth than even their legend could set forth! As a mother takes her child and kisses it and then lays it down to sleep in its own bed, so did the Lord kiss the soul of Moses away to be with Him forever—and then He hid the body of Moses we know not where. Whoever had such a burial as that of Moses? Angels contended over it, but Satan has failed to use it for his purposes. That body was not lost, for in due time it appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, talking with Jesus concerning the greatest event that ever transpired! Oh that we, also, may pass away amid the most joyful prospects! Heaven coming down to us as we go up to Heaven! May we also attain unto the resurrection from among the dead and be with our Lord in His Glory!

Soon our turn shall come. [Brother Spurgeon was with His Master in less than five years.] Do we dread it? As we are favored to serve our Lord, we shall be favored to be called Home in due season. Let us always be ready. Yes, joyfully ready! When we are dying, we shall not see the land of Naphtali and Ephraim, but the Covenant—and the infinite provisions of its promises will be spread out before our soul, as Canaan at the feet of Moses! Wrapt in happy enjoyment of precious promises, we shall, with surprise, find ourselves ushered into the place where the promises are all fulfilled—

***“There shall we see His face,
And never, never sin!
But from the rivers of His Grace,
Drink endless pleasures in.”***

To the Believer it is not death to die! Since Jesus has died and risen again, the sting of death is gone—therefore let us prepare ourselves to climb where Moses stood and view the landscape! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Numbers 20:1-13; Deuteronomy 3:21-28; 32:48-52; 34:1-12.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—912, 876, 875.**

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