

CROSSING THE JORDAN

NO. 2039

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“Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, Pass through the host and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals. For within three days you shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God gives you to possess it.”
Joshua 1:10, 11.

THE story of the passage of the Jordan might instructively be used in many ways. It was a very wonderful event. It occurred on the tenth day of the first month—on the same day of the year as the passage of the Red Sea. Of that glorious miracle it was the fortieth anniversary and you may very properly join the dividing of the Red Sea to that of the Jordan, for so the Holy Spirit has done in the one hundred and fourteenth Psalm—“The sea saw it and fled: Jordan was driven back.”

I am going to use the passage of the Jordan as our forefathers used to employ it, namely, as a type of our passage out of this world into the place appointed for our rest. Canaan is only measurably a type of that better land, for the Canaanite was still in the land and Israel had to fight many a battle to obtain possession of the country. In our more perfect Canaan there are no enemies to encounter, no sins to struggle with, and no powers of darkness to conquer. Still, I think the type, if imperfect, has been so long established in the Christian Church and has yielded so much of edification to godly people, that I may safely use it.

We cannot afford to give up such a hymn as—

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

Nor can we cease to sing with Watts—

*“Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dressed in living green;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood
While Jordan rolled between.”*

The Israelites, before they crossed the Jordan, had notice given them. The officers went through the host with the message, “Prepare you victuals. For within three days you shall pass over this Jordan.” The Lord often favors His people with notice that the time of their departure is at hand. He has fixed the hour of our entrance into rest and it can neither be postponed by skill of physician nor hastened by malice of foe. No Satanic force can hurl us to the grave before our time—

*“Plagues and death around us fly,
Till He bids we cannot die.”*

In due time there comes a whisper in the ear of the Believer, "Rise up and come away." Mr. Bunyan describes the pilgrims as tarrying on the shore of that river which parted them from the celestial country until a post came to one and another, announcing that the silver cord must be loosed and the golden blow be broken. Father Honest and Mr. Ready-to-Halt and Christiana and the rest of them received each one a call from the hill country and passed over the black water to the golden strand—where the shining ones stood to meet them.

Perhaps some of us may get no such summons. For we may be taken away on a sudden. Many good people daily pray against sudden death and there are legitimate reasons for so doing. But to a child of God it is of small consequence, for death will never find him unprepared if he is living in communion with God. If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, an abundant entrance will be ministered to us into eternal glory even if we should fall dead in a moment. The change would simply mean going from the lower room of our Father's house into an upper chamber more bright and beautiful—but still a part of the same house.

A few Sunday evenings ago, when I was unable to preach to you, my beloved and esteemed friend, Mr. Newman Hall, most generously occupied this pulpit and his sermon touched upon Heaven and the joyous entrance of the saints into the immortal state. One of our sisters was greatly rejoiced by that sermon. She went home and in going into her bedroom she fell down and entered in a second into rest. Possibly that sermon was to her a stray note from the harps of angels to call her Home. We, too, may have such a speedy summons. Or we may have months of waiting. What matters? Let the angelic convoy appear when our best Beloved shall see fit—it shall be no question of preference with us whether the Master shall call us today, tomorrow, or in twenty years.

Let Him call us at cockcrowing, or at midnight, or midday, we will answer Him, "Here am I. For You did call me." We will enter into the joy of our Lord and be forever with Him. When God's children have their candle lighted for them and they know that it is time to go upstairs, they feel glad to end their pilgrimage and rest in Jesus. We are all of us much nearer Home than we think. It will be greatly wise to talk with our last hours and to anticipate that time when the message shall come, "Within three days you shall pass over this Jordan."

May the Holy Spirit make our meditation profitable in view of our end! We shall observe the tenor of this notice. And then observe the sequel of this notice. May we have Divine Grace given us to understand what we speak and hear and to make use of it for our everlasting benefit.

I. First, OBSERVE THE TENOR OF THIS NOTICE. Notice that there are three leading words in it—"prepare," "pass over," "possess." "Prepare you victuals. For within three days you shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land."

The first word that came to them was, "Prepare." Be in journeying order. The soldier carries his rations with him when he has to make a quick march—"Prepare you victuals." Children of God, be ready to go from this world. Let not your roots strike deep into this earthly soil for you must in

due time be transplanted. And the more roothold you get to this world, the worse it will be for you. Hold everything with a loose hand. The soldier in a foreign land must not settle down and begin to gather surroundings about him which would naturalize him in the country. He is an alien, tarrying till his prince shall call him back to the home country.

You cannot be in exile long. Heaven is prepared to receive you. Be ready! Your heart is in Heaven—send your best goods there—where they will be safe from moth and rust. Have about you what little things you want for spending money but make the best of your way through this Vanity Fair. Keep in marching order. Be prepared at a moment's notice to start on your way. But inasmuch as he said, "Prepare you victuals" did he not mean, "Begin to feed on food of that sort upon which you are henceforth to live"?

The manna would cease in three days and never fall again. After they crossed the Jordan, they would feed on the corn of the land. Manna was the staple of their wilderness food. But they had eaten other things as well, for they had flocks and herds. They were to prepare, not manna, for that would not keep above a day but such food as ordinarily they would subsist upon when they entered upon their estates. O children of God, get good meals of spiritual meat, the kind of meat which you will live upon hereafter. Feed much on the love of God and the glorious Truths which are laid up in Christ Jesus. Care nothing for the husks of human thought and carnal eloquence but take to the solid meat, which is to be your dainty nourishment when you dwell in the Presence of God forever.

I wish that professing Christians were more cautious about what they feed on. I am afraid that some professors, if they hear a sermon, are satisfied whatever the sort may be. They do not care what the doctrine may be if a clever man talks prettily and gratifies their ear. Some people can eat sawdust and make a meal of shadows. I could almost wish it were true of them that they could drink any deadly thing and it should not hurt them. For assuredly they do drink very deadly things when they go to the tavern of modern thought. But I would say to you this morning, feed on Christ, feed on spiritual food, feed on the pure Truth of God's Word and feed your souls on nothing else.

Know the taste of what you eat and let it be as clear and definite as that of butter and honey so you may readily refuse the evil and choose the good. Joshua meant—Stand ready, for the time is getting very short. There is not long to wait. Very soon you will have traversed the stream and landed on the far shore. Even now you can catch a glimpse of the palm trees of Jericho on the other side. But in three days you shall gather their fruit. Beloved, how would you feel if you knew that, within three days, you must die? Would you welcome the news?

Are you quite sure that it would please you? Remember the wife and family and the business and all that! Can you bear the snapping of the ties which bind you to this life? Have you learned so to live in this world that you are not of it? Could you cheerfully say, "Forever with the Lord. Amen, so let it be"? Oh, that God may keep us so watchful that the shortest summons may be long enough!

The exhortation given in the thirteenth verse is one which may be useful also to us. "Remember the Word." It is a grand help for going over the Jordan, if we will remember the Word of the Lord. Our faith enables us both to live and to die on the promise of God. "Remember the Word which Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded you, saying, The Lord your God has given you rest and has given you this land." If a man forgets the Word of the Lord and comes to die, he dies in a pitiable plight. For without the light of the Word, he takes a leap in the dark. If a man can refresh his memory with the grand Truths of the Covenant, if he can come to the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, then he may die bravely.

Israel might go down the shelving banks of the rushing river because the Lord had given the nation a promise concerning the other side. I said to a dying friend, "Have you no fears?" "Fears!" he said, "How can I have any? You have fed me upon such solid food that I am not afraid to die. Jesus bore my sins in His own body on the tree and I am accepted in Him." Neither will you be fearful, Beloved, if you have provided for your journey such food as the Lord has stored up in His Word.

But then he said also, third chapter and fifth verse, "Sanctify yourselves." If we knew we were to die in three days, should we not wish to put our hearts, our thoughts, our families, into a better state? I remember a Sister, by no means superstitious, who, when she came to die, was very earnest that all her linen and everything about her body, should be white and clean. And I somewhat sympathized in her feeling because I knew that it was only the outward expression of her inward desire to be purely arrayed as to her spirit. Since we may die suddenly, let us purify ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. Let us pray our Lord to wash us again.

And, as our dear Brother prayed just now, "may the dust of our last day's march be taken from our feet!" If there has been any neglect of duty let us be quick to perform that which has been delayed. Beloved, in the prospect of going Home, sanctify yourselves. May the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, so cleanse us that we may be meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

The next word was, "Pass over this Jordan." They were not called to linger on the brink, nor to sit with their feet in the stream but to cross over it. Israel had been forty years in the wilderness and surely that was long enough. Some of you have been fifty, sixty, seventy, perhaps eighty years in the desert. But when the summons shall come, you will have no more marching over the burning sand and no more fear of the fiery serpents and scorpions. "Within three days you shall pass over this Jordan" will put an end to the wilderness tramping. Life is long enough if we have had Divine Grace enough. He lives long that lives well. He who has served his God with all his heart will not wish to linger a moment after his life-work is done. You are not called to linger on the bed of sickness for ages but to pass over to your rest.

And notice, the call was not to go down into the Jordan to stop there. Blessed be God, we are not going down into the grave to be lost there. But we make use of it as an open door to Paradise. Our spirit shall mount tri-

umphantly to Christ and even the poor body, after it has lain a while in the dust, shall rise again in the glorious image of Christ. The grave is the refining pot which puts away the dross from the gold. Death, before we knew the Savior, was like a vast cavern into which there were many foot-prints but all the tracks led inward—none came forth from the gloomy abode of the shades.

But now, by the power of our Lord's resurrection, looking into the cave we perceive that He has pierced the hills of darkness and made a way for us to the other side. We go into what looks like a dark den but we come out at the other side into the land that flows with milk and honey. "You shall pass over this Jordan."

Our text reads like a promise—"Within three days you shall pass over this Jordan." Some of them might have said, "How?" They saw no apparent means—no bridge, no pontoons, no ferry. Ah, but says Joshua, "Within three days you shall pass over this Jordan." And the word was true. Do you say, "I do not see how I am to be helped to die"? The Lord will give dying grace in dying moments. He comes in when the need is pressing. Those who have wrestled earnestly in life shall march off triumphantly in death. Jehovah Shaddai is God All-sufficient.

He knows how to take you through the river. Let not your heart be troubled. It is not yours to make a way through the deep waters—that remains with God alone. It is yours to obey—it is His to provide. Sometimes you are so foolish as to try your hand at providing and then you neglect the obeying and as a consequence you fail both in the providing and the obeying. Mind your own business and the Lord will perform His Word. Israel marches, Jehovah clears the way—and a glorious result is brought about.

Somebody might have said, "We cannot pass over Jordan, for the current is furious and the river is unusually swollen." In the spring, at the time of barley harvest, Jordan overflows all its banks and becomes a river which only the very strongest of David's heroes could ford. So some child of God might say, "But my prospect in dying is darker than that of any other Believer. I shall suffer more pain, more depression, more poverty. And thus to me Jordan overflows all its banks." Yes, yes. But still you shall go over it, for the Lord has said it and none of His words shall fail. You shall cross the swollen torrent and smile at your own fears.

While I was thinking this over, I said to myself, "Why did the Lord bring His people to Jordan at the time when the snow was melting on the Lebanon and therefore the river was more full and the current more strong than usual?" There was ample reason. It was then that the early harvest was ripening throughout the country. Suppose there had been no corn in the fields ready for reaping, how would the children of Israel have been fed when they were across the river and the manna had ceased? Their food stood in the fields ready to be gathered and immediately they ate of the produce of the land.

God knows the best time for His saints to die. We look at some ugly circumstance connected with their departure and we forget other and infinitely more important matters which make it a thing to be rejoiced in. So

you, dear Friend, need not fear to pass over the Jordan though it has filled all its banks, since there is a reason for it and a graciously sufficient one. God will give you extraordinary help in extraordinary trial and glorify Himself in you.

“Oh,” but they might have said, “We cannot pass over Jordan because there is Jericho right in front of us and of course the inhabitants will call in the Jebusites, who are not far off at Jerusalem and these will fetch in the Hivites and the Amorites and all the other nations. And these will hotly dispute the passage of the river and it will be out of the question to force our way through that torrent and fight up the other bank against such foes.”

Such a fear would be most natural. When Caesar tried to land in England what did the Britons do? They rushed into the water off Dover to meet the Romans and they fought with them in the surf of the sea. It was natural that brave men should fight the invaders in the water and not suffer them to tread their soil. Do you suppose that the Canaanites were less brave than the ancient Britons? Had there not been a spell upon them they would have pressed back Israel in the river itself and would not have allowed them to enter the land.

Yet Israel passed over Jordan at the appointed time. God had said “You shall go over,” and they did go over. And no Canaanite, Hivite, or Jebusite, dared to molest them. So the poor child of God sighs, “Alas, when I come to die, Satan will meet me, temptations and doubts and fears will rush upon me.” We read in the third chapter of Joshua, sixteenth verse, “And the people passed over right against Jericho.” Fear not, O trembling heart. God can so deal with evil spirits and with the doubts of your own spirit that they shall be still as a stone till you have passed over.

No demon shall dare to peep or mutter. No doubt or fear shall venture near. We read, “All the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.” Not an arrow or a stone came from over the walls of Jericho. Glory be to the name of the Lord! He made the hearts of Israel’s enemies to melt so that no more courage remained in them. Thus far upon the second word, “You shall pass over.”

The third word was “possess.” They were to pass the river to possess the land which God had given them. We possess nothing here. Those goods which we think we possess melt away like an icicle from a hot hand. Like birds on the plowed field which are gone the moment we clap our hands, so do riches take to themselves wings and fly away. Such things are poor stuff to call possessions. But we have on the other side of Jordan treasures worth owning. By a Covenant of salt, God has given us in Christ Jesus everlasting rest, triumph, happiness, glory.

There was in Palestine a portion of land for each man of Israel—so is there in Heaven a heritage appointed for each one of the Lord’s people. There is a crown in Heaven that nobody’s head can wear but mine, a harp that nobody’s hand can play but mine and a mansion that no man may enter but myself alone. I believe the same of each of you, my Brothers and Sisters, who are in Christ Jesus. There is a Heaven for all the saints but there is also special joy and delight for each one of the redeemed—in my

Father's house are many mansions. You have to go over Jordan but you are not going away from home, you are returning to your Father's house.

You are not going to a land of toil and poverty, sorrow and death. You are going to be forever with the Lord, where no evil can reach you. If, then, the message should come to your ear today, "Within three days you shall pass over this Jordan," say to yourself, "It is well, for I shall behold the face of Him I love and meet with those who are redeemed by His blood."

Thus I have spoken to you upon the tenor of this notice. But I hear the bell strike the quarter and therefore the voice of time bids me hasten on to a second most important matter.

II. I want you now to OBSERVE THE SEQUEL OF THIS NOTICE, or what followed upon the summons. I shall try to show what will follow to you who are in Christ, when you receive your notice to depart—what will happen to you?

The first thing that happened to Israel was this—a singular faith was bestowed. I can hardly believe that the people under Joshua were the children of those unbelieving Jews whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. Throughout the early chapters of Joshua, it is recorded that they believed Joshua, whatever he said to them. He had strange and strong things to utter but they did not doubt or demur. What pleases me most is that when he spoke to the Reubenites and told them what they had to do, they said, "Whosoever he is that does rebel against your commandment and will not hearken unto your words in all that you command him, he shall be put to death—only be strong and of a good courage."

Think of that! They took upon themselves to encourage Joshua, saying, "only be strong and of a good courage." They admonished the bravest of captains—even they who were but of the rank and file. Some of God's very poor and tried people are occasionally so full of faith and courage that they try to cheer up their minister. The children instruct the fathers. I like to see them thus returning the compliment for it shows that they are in a happy condition themselves. If their simple cheer should seem superfluous to Joshua, yet it showed the honesty of their hearts and the fullness of their confidence in God.

There was not a doubt or a fear throughout the whole camp. Now, Beloved, when the children of God come to die, those of them who have been poor, trembling things before, receive new courage and strength and even minister comfort to those who are stronger than themselves! It is brave to see how Mr. Ready-to-Halt puts his crutches away when he is going over Jordan. Mr. Feeble-Mind bids them bury his feeble mind in a dung-hill, for it would be of no use to anybody. The Lord will give us more Divine Grace and we shall wonder at ourselves that we could have been aforesaid so distrustful.

"At eventide it shall be light." It is wonderful to see how God's babes in Christ shoot up to six feet six in a short time. I do not know what change death itself makes in the soul. But I believe that a little before death a wonderful advance is often made by the Believer. The man of God matures at a marvelous rate—even as these Israelites, who had been so prone to

murmur—were now filled with a unanimity of faith which is perfectly amazing. May God thus brace up our faith when the time comes.

Next, a special assurance was given. See the fifth verse of the third chapter—“Tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.” When they should come to the last day of the three, great wonders would be seen. The Lord is always working marvels. But when we come to cross the Jordan we shall see His wonders as never before. You have not seen the Lord yet, Beloved, as you will see Him as the great Wonder-worker. You have had a faint view of your God, sometimes, and this has made you feel like David when he danced before the ark. But you shall soon have another and a clearer view and then you will long to mount like an angel and veil your face in His nearer presence.

You shall have such wonders revealed to you and in you, both of grace and glory, that your soul shall be ravished with delight. You shall see Jesus and His love shall be more fully revealed to you. You shall begin to hear things which it is not lawful for a man to utter and you shall feel glory begun below. Your death day shall be your heavenly wedding day and your last day on earth shall be the best day you have ever spent on it. When you come close to Heaven in point of time, Heaven will come close to you in point of joy. With a strong faith and a delightful assurance for that faith to feed upon, you will be blessed, indeed.

Next, note that the people had with them a conquering leader. Joshua was at their head to encourage and direct them. When you and I shall pass over Jordan we shall have Jesus with us. Joshua is but another form of that dear name in which we triumph. He says, “Be of good cheer. Because I live, you shall live also.” He it is who cries, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.” If our Joshua should seem to leave us, it will be on the flowery hill-side, or in the gardens of delight. But He will not even appear to do so when the dark waters flow at our feet and we are called upon to pass through the stream.

Blessed be our Lord Jesus Christ, He never forgets His own. He is always with us but He is most clearly so when our last trouble is upon us. He is gone away into the hill country to make ready the house where we shall shortly be at home. But He will surely come again and receive us unto Himself, that where He is, there we may be, also. Therefore, be not afraid, for Jesus is with you. Did I hear you say—

***“Oh, if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul would stretch her wings in haste,
Fly fearless through death’s iron gate,
Nor fear the terror as she passed”?***

Yes, Jesus will come and meet you and you shall forget that you are dying for the eternal life shall come streaming into your soul. The candle of your mortal existence shall expire without much note, for the glory of the Lord shall have risen upon you. The moans of expiring will be swallowed up in the harmonies of the celestial choirs.

But what next? The Israelites had a clear guidance afforded them. Read the fourth verse of the third chapter. The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord

went before them and a distance was set between them and the priests bearing the ark so that they might show reverence to it and might clearly see it as their guide. Thus said Joshua to them, "When you see the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall remove from your place and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that you may know the way by which you must go: for you have not passed this way heretofore."

You have been through many experiences but to die will be a new one. You have traversed certain roads more than once or twice but this road is new to you and can only be trod once. Once and for all you must cross this Jordan—therefore the Divine Presence shall go before you and show you the way. The Lord will surely direct your steps. Do not begin saying to yourself, "What shall I do in sickness?" You will be guided by Him who bore our sorrows and infirmities. "But what shall I do when the pulse is faint and low and the death-sweat beads the brow?"

Jesus will show you what to do, for He also died. He knows what faintness, pain, thirst and fever mean, for He has felt the same. In death, Divine Grace will be magnified to the uttermost. Some children of God are always delighted at the idea that Christ may come and that they shall never die. I would be delighted if the Lord would come at once. But as to dying or not dying I do not care a jot. I think that of the two, it might be preferable to die, because those who die will have a kind of fellowship with Christ in His death which will not be experienced by those who never sleep in the tomb.

They that are alive and remain till His coming will miss the privilege of actually passing through the tomb as the Savior did, though even they must be changed. Brothers and Sisters, we traverse a road which has known the feet of the Crucified. Where should the dying members rest but with their dying Head? Why should I fear to sleep where Jesus went to bed? Did He not leave the sheets behind? He laid the napkin by itself that mourners might wipe their eyes. But He laid the grave clothes by themselves, that we might find in the grave a bed well furnished for our slumber. Oh, yes, you shall have Divine direction when the darkness gathers about you!

With Israel a forerunner led the way. Was not that a glorious spectacle when the priests took up the golden staves and with them lifted the ark upon their shoulders and then in stately march carried it down to the river? No Israelite had to tread a novel path, or to make a road for himself. Our great High Priest has gone down to the river before us and has touched its waters with the soles of His feet. "He has tasted death for every man." He went into the depths of death and slept three days in the heart of the earth. The Ark of the Covenant leads the way and we have only to follow.

Nor did the Forerunner quit the scene, for the Divine Presence remained. The priests went on till they came to the river bed and descended the hollow, going on to the very center of it. There they stopped till all the host had passed over. Hour after hour the priests remained with the holy

burden on their shoulders—they stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan. First came the Reubenites and the half tribe of Manasseh marching by in military order and then all the other tribes in succession. But the priests remained like statues, still bearing the ark, till the last Israelite had gone clean over Jordan.

There stood the emblem of a Covenant God, with its Mercy Seat, its sacred Law and the rod of government. The Lord Jesus will go before you as your great High Priest, your Propitiation and your Covenant. And He will abide with you in the last solemn article until you are safely on the shore of the land of promise. The feeblest and least of all the host shall climb the celestial hills on the other side and sing of everlasting love.

O Lord, my God, when my last hours shall come, let my eyes behold the Lord Jesus and the Covenant ordered in all things and sure—

***“When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside.
Death of death and Hell’s destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan’s side!
Songs of praises
I will ever give to You.”***

In consequence of the priests going down into the river the stream was dried up. Wonderful sight it must have been to behold the waters roll back, and stand in a congealed heap! No less so if, as some think, the torrent rolled back some thirty miles so that the Israelites could look right up a long roadway of dry river-bed. At the place where the great crystalline heap was piled up what an extraordinary wonder met the eye! Thus there was a broad passageway for the multitudes of Israel to go marching through and to effect the crossing rapidly.

Suppose, when you come to die, the Jordan should turn out to be no river at all. What if you should go over dry-shod? Why should it not be so? It has often been the case with the Lord’s chosen. Many make a joyful exit. A Sister used to be much troubled about dying. She knew where she was going but she dreaded the passage. She died in her sleep and in all probability never knew when she passed from the one state to the other till she found herself among the angels. Death is a pin’s prick to many.

How many sing themselves into glory! And some, who could not sing themselves, have made others do so while they forded the stream. Surely we misrepresent Death—he is to the Believer no skeleton form but the angel of the Lord come to gather the flowers of the Lord’s garden. Death has lost its terrors. “The sting of death is sin,” and that is forgiven. “The strength of sin is the Law,” and that is fulfilled. The black waters have failed, we pass over Jordan dry-shod.

Then notice, the people were very quick in crossing. Death is short work. According to the tenth verse of the fourth chapter, we read—“And the people hasted and passed over.” They did not hurry because they were afraid but they hasted because they were many and would desire be all over before the sun went down. They were eager to take possession of their country and confident in marching upon Jericho where the first of their foes were entrenched. They went through the river at a quick march and came upon the other side at the same rate. Of course it would take a

considerable time with so vast a number to cross, but they were all moving on in an orderly and rapid manner.

After all, what is the act of death? "What?" cries one, "is there not a terrible amount of pain connected with death?" I answer—No. It is *life* that has the pain. Death is the end of all pain. You blame death for a disease of which he is the cure. You imagine a thing called death which does not really exist. In the twinkling of an eye we shall be up and away!—

***"One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks—
We scarce can say, 'He's gone,'
Before the ransomed spirit takes
Its mansion near the Throne."***

Therefore, because you will hasten to pass over, you need not be alarmed at so short a trial, which will actually turn out to be no trial at all.

We read in the ninth verse of the fourth chapter, that the Israelites in traversing the Jordan left a memorial behind. Before they had quite passed out of the river bed, a number of chosen men took twelve of the great masses of rock which lay in the bottom of the river and piled them on end upon each other, to remain as a perpetual memorial that Israel had been there. You also will bear your testimony in departing—you will set up your memorial for your children after you and they shall say, "Our father died in sure and certain hope of being with Jesus."

Perhaps some unconverted ones will be saved, after you are dead and gone, by your last testimony. Even if your deathbed should not be so bright as some, even its clouds may not be without their effect. A holy man had prayed much for his boys and girls but never saw them converted and this, with the troubles which grew out of their waywardness, made his last hours to be sadly clouded. For this cause he was sorely troubled, for he feared that it would confirm his sons in their unbelief.

But mark how the Lord worked! They buried their father and when they were met together, the eldest son turned to his brothers and remarked upon the sorrows which had weighed down their father at the last. "Brothers," said he, "if our father, who was so good a man, was so troubled in death, what will become of us when we die?" This most reasonable remark was the means of the conversion of the brothers. I would like to die in the dark if it would bring all my people to the Savior. Would not you? Apart from this, no doubt we shall set up stones in the midst of Jordan and witness that the Lord is a faithful God.

One thing more—they also raised a memorial on the other shore. Twelve men took from the river twelve stones and bore them on their shoulders before the ark. Can you not see them with their loads and the ark coming up after them from the riverbed? They piled these twelve stones upon each other in Canaan. You and I, when we get to Heaven, shall take our memorials with us and pile them up. We will make known to angels and principalities and powers the manifold wisdom and goodness of God to us in life and death.

I hope to begin to preach before long, not to this little congregation of six thousand but to countless multitudes of the redeemed in Heaven. Myriads of angels will come together to hear how God made a worm to thresh

the mountains and helped a sinner to declare his love. You will stand with your groups about you and shining ones will linger to hear of your salvation, your trials, your joys and your achievements, or rather of what the Lord has worked for you and by you. And so God will be glorified and the other side of Jordan will be adorned with memorials to the measureless Grace of God.

You will have to turn this subject over in your meditations—I have only been able to give you the rough outline of a sermon. Read the whole narrative with care and may God bless it to you!

But, dear Friends, suppose you are not the people of God. You will have to die all the same. One of these times you also will have to pass over the torrent. What a different lot will be yours! You will have to leave your possessions behind. A sage said to a worldling, when he looked over his beautiful gardens, “These are the things that make it hard to die.” You will have to leave everything which you call your own here. And you have no possessions over yonder. You have no Joshua to be your leader, no priest to be your forerunner, no God in covenant to hold the ground for you—you have, in fact, nothing to overcome the bitterness of death. The floods will carry you away. The torrents will hurry you to the dead sea.

Even now, when you are a little ill and in pain, you become dreadfully frightened. If in the land of peace wherein you trusted they have wearied you, what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? The dark stream will not be dry for you. Dare you take the dreadful plunge? Mark how the black current rushes down to that dreadful sea of death! Are you resolved to be swept down to that place of desolation?

The Lord have mercy upon you before you are drifted into the abode of the accursed! “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. For he that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” So says the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

DISCIPLINE IN CHRIST'S ARMY

NO. 3188

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 1910.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 13, 1879.***

***"Pass through the host, and command the people."
Joshua 1:11.***

[When the "Army Discipline and Regulation Bill" was before the House of Commons, Mr. Spurgeon delivered this discourse upon it. Shortly afterwards, he published a summary of the sermon in *The Sword and the Trowel*, with a prefatory note in which he said, "We hope to print the whole discourse for the use of soldiers." With this view, he had commenced to revise it, but had not completed it, and it is now published for the first time. Workers among soldiers will find the sermon specially suitable for them.]

BELIEVERS are called to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ. As many of us as believe in Him and have obtained eternal life through Him, are now enlisted beneath His banner to fight the battles of holiness against sin and of truth against error. We war not, however, with flesh and blood, but with spiritual enemies. We slay lust and lying, drunkenness and blasphemy—and we wage a never-ending warfare against everything which is dishonest, unkind, selfish, or ungodly. He who died upon the Cross out of love to the undeserving has taught us how to endure hardness for His sake as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Our ambition is to fight a good fight and keep the faith. And by the power of the Holy Spirit we hope to do so and to receive from our Great Commander's mouth the blessed commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Being soldiers, we come under discipline, and it is well for all who are about to enlist to know what the discipline is, for our glorious Captain, the Lord Jesus Christ, says to all who wish to join this army, "Count the cost." We, too, would say to all who propose to be soldiers of the Cross and followers of the Lamb—"Count the cost." Do not join the ranks blindly and then change your mind and desert. Enlist with your eyes open and stay in the service till you are veterans. There's nothing like knowing what you are doing—and choosing Christ's service deliberately. It is to that end that I shall speak upon the discipline of Christ's army, for perhaps some who are in the army of Christ in name, but not in truth, may find out their mistake and endeavor, by sincere repentance, to make sure work of the matter so that they may not be deceived. It will be an awful thing to be found out to be a hypocrite and to be drummed out of the Lord's army at the last.

I have here a copy of the "Army Discipline and Regulation Bill" sent to me by a member of the House of Commons, with this written in the corner of it, "May not the Christian soldier derive some profit from this?" I feel sure he may. May the Holy Spirit enable us to do so!

This Bill contains a list of offenses for which a soldier on active service is liable to death—and those offenses are excellent figures of certain spiritual offenses which must not be committed by the soldiers of Christ! If they fall into them, and continue in them, it will prove that they are already under sentence of death and are not Christ's servants at all. If any complain that the discipline of our Lord Jesus is strict, it will be of benefit to them to see how severe is the discipline of every army. Nothing can make Christ's service sweet except love to Him—His service appears hardest to those who have hard hearts—and just as men grow right and true, they find the Lord's yoke to be easy and His burden light. Judging Christianity from the outside, it will always seem to unregenerate men a very strict Puritanical system. But judging it from the inside, when the heart is renewed and the soul is charmed with the blessed Person of their Divine Redeemer, we love our Lord's service and find intense delight in it. We consent to His Law, that it is good, and we long with all our hearts to keep His statutes even to the end. We are glad to know what offenses are, that we may pray to be kept from them for we would not willingly offend so good a Lord.

In this Bill, we read that "A Person subject to Military Law, when on Active Service, is punishable with Death, if he commits any of the following offences"—

(1). "Shamefully abandons or delivers up any garrison, place, post, or guard, or uses any means to compel or induce any governor, commanding officer, or other person, to shamefully abandon or deliver up any garrison, place, post, or guard, which was the duty of such governor, officer, or person to defend."

This is a grievous offense in the Church of God and I am sorry to say that it has often been committed. We are put in trust with the Gospel of Jesus Christ—that is the citadel which we are to defend at all hazards—so what a sad thing it is when professed Christ's ministers give up Truth of God after Truth in order to please the public! "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon," that professed servants of Christ have betrayed the Gospel itself to the enemy! O you who follow the banner of Jesus, never do this! Defend it with your lives! Die in the defense of it, as the martyrs did, and never be ashamed of it in any company. You may not be an officer and, therefore, you cannot give up a garrison or castle to the enemy—but you have your own post to guard—take care that you guard it! Never give up the Bible—no, not a leaf of it! Never give up prayer—stand sentry there and let no man laugh you out of it! Whatever post the Lord Jesus commits to you, take care that you hold it till He comes, or till you, yourself, are called Home to the heavenly head-

quarters. Hold fast, as with a grip of steel, every Doctrine which the Lord has taught you whether others approve of it or not! Hold fast, also, and endeavor, by the aid of God's Spirit, to put into practice every precept of the Lord. Value the practical part of Christianity as well as the doctrinal—and prize them both beyond gold. Be not of the mind of those who say of Christ's rules, "These are of little consequence." No! Your Master's command cannot be a trifle! And the spirit which thinks little of anything which Jesus commands is an evil spirit! We must pray against it and strive against it. Make it a matter of conscience to follow Jesus at all hazards wherever He goes. Stand up for the Scriptures and the true Gospel—and "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." Do not give up a hair of the head of the Truth of God, nor let her enemies take away so much as a lace of her shoes.

I believe in the invincibility of truth. Only give truth time and God, being with her, she must prevail. I believe also in the invincibility of the Church which is built upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and against which the gates of Hell shall never prevail. I am quite willing to be in a minority upon a great many questions. I would not believe any more than I do even if everybody else believed it—and I would not be any the less confident of its truthfulness if it was accepted by only a hundredth or a thousandth part of those who now believe it! Get hold of a Truth of God, my dear Brother or Sister, and you have laid hold of that in which God dwells! Know your Bible thoroughly and believe what the Bible reveals. And then, if there are arrayed against Biblical Truth—all the powers of Christendom, all the kings and princes and prelates and priests joined together—you may rest assured that they will only be as so much chaff driven before the wind! If they believe error, and advocate error, all their pomp and power will be but as the wind, the earthquake and the fire in which God was not! But in your calm, quiet adherence to the Truth of God—with a tenacity that would brave even martyrdom rather than renounce what God has revealed to you in His Word and by his Spirit, there is a power that must win in the long run—so hold to it and be not afraid!

(2). "Shamefully casts away his arms, ammunition, or tools in the presence of the enemy."

This is a terrible crime, indeed, in a Christian soldier. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense of reward." Never let go your shield of faith! Under ridicule and persecution, buckle it to your arm. Grip firmly that blessed sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God! Let no man take from you a single text of it! Speak up for the blessed Truth of God and stand to your gun—this will gall the enemy and protect yourself. Rally to the colors and wrap them around your heart when they seem to be in peril—I mean, the blood-red colors of the Cross of Christ!

Dear young Brothers and Sisters who love the Lord, I know you have a hard fight of it when you get among your friends who are so mean as to ridicule you. But never say, "Die"—never give up your faith, never yield to their sins, nor give them countenance by so much as joining in their laughter! Do not be misled by false teachers, but obey the Word of God and follow that alone. Read it for yourselves and what you see there lay hold upon, and let it be your religion. I have often said to myself—

***"Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to my heart."***

Let us, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, still hold without wavering to our confidence in the Gospel as God's great battle-axe and weapon of war! Let us be fully persuaded that this is the chosen instrument by which the Lord will glorify Himself and subdue the nations of the earth. We may take it for granted that God's Providential dispensations will always tend in that direction and that the ponderous wheels full of eyes are always revolving in such a way as to work out the eternal purposes of Grace in the salvation of those whom Christ has redeemed. But, for all that, *the* power which God mostly blesses is the energy of the Holy Spirit exerted through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ—not by kings and princes, or learned doctors or eloquent men—but through the Gospel as preached by humble and earnest Believers, illustrated by gracious and holy lives, and supported by fervent and unceasing prayers! So, Beloved, have faith in the Gospel! Do not put your confidence in anything that is not authorized by the New Testament. Do not be so foolish as to use any means which are not in accordance with God's Word. And do not enter into any alliance with the world under the delusion that you will, by so doing, help the Gospel! Be satisfied that God is in the still small voice and, as He is there, give good heed to the message that He utters—and gad not about to seek any other ground of confidence, but be content with, "Thus says the Lord."

(3). *"Treacherously holds correspondence with or gives intelligence to the enemy, or treacherously or through cowardice sends a flag of truce to the enemy."*

This is another thing that Christian soldiers must never do. Their orders are clear—"Come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." This battle of ours against sin admits of no truce whatever—no terms of compromise—no going a certain way with sinners in the hope of inducing them to come a little way with us! No, there must be nothing of the kind. Let the word, "compromise," with regard to evil never even cross your thoughts! Our Lord and Master made no compromises. He told us that it would be better to pluck out our right eye and cut off our right hand rather than that they should cause us to offend. Give your heart so fully up to Jesus, my Be-

loved Brothers and Sisters, that you are altogether separated from this world! Let the world know *where* you are, *what* you are and take care that *you* know where it is and what it is! Be not, I pray you, conformed to this world! And, on the other hand, never hide your religion. Do not ask for a truce with the enemy, for that would be treachery to your Lord. Remember that solemn warning, "Whoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." That is no saying of mine—it is one of the faithful and true declarations of this Inspired Book!

I must not stay to say more about this matter, though it is a most suggestive point.

(4). *"Assists the enemy with arms, ammunition, or supplies, or knowingly harbors or protects an enemy not being a prisoner."*

Now, every professor who leads an inconsistent life furnishes Christ's enemies with "arms, ammunition, or supplies," for they say, "Ah, that is one of your Christians!" They fire that as a most deadly shot against us. They point to the ways of inconsistent professors and they turn to us and say, "That is what you Christians are!" If they take one bad sovereign, they never think of saying that all the sovereigns in circulation are counterfeit—yet they might as well say that as declare that because here and there a professor is a hypocrite or inconsistent, therefore, we are all so! That is not true, yet it gives the enemy encouragement and supplies him with ammunition when any of you who profess to be Christ's, walk as you ought not to walk!

And then, dear Friends, if we conceal any sin within our bosoms, this is knowingly harboring an enemy. If you who are supposed to be Christian people drink too much in secret—and there are some, not only men, but women, who make a profession of Christianity, who sin in this way. And we must speak very plainly when this evil becomes as common as it is—you are knowingly harboring an enemy! If, in your trade, you follow unrighteous customs—and there are plenty of tradesmen who do that—and if you adopt their schemes though you profess to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are knowingly harboring His enemy—and you are not worthy to be called a good soldier of Jesus Christ!

The enemy will get in if he can, but we must do all we can and also cry to God to keep him out. You know that on a cold winter's day, a man shuts the door, lights a fire, draws the curtains and insulates the door, yet even then the cold gets in. So is it with sin—you may watch and guard against it as much as you like but, still, the cold will get in—but it is a very different kind of cold from that which would come in if you were to open the windows and doors and let it in. That is what some do concerning sin. They keep no watch, no guard against it. They tempt the devil to tempt them—and those who do this and thus knowingly harbor the enemy are no true soldiers of Jesus Christ.

(5). *“Having been made a prisoner of war, voluntarily serves with or voluntarily aids the enemy.”*

Now young men, especially—you who are members of this Church or some other Church—there are times when you get into a great fix. There are all round you persons who are opposed to true religion—and they begin by inviting you to do this, and that, and the other, and then they try to compel you to do as they wish. They make you, as it were, a prisoner of war, and they say, “You *shall* do such-and-such and such-and-such or we will make you do it.” Or possibly they suppose that if they use enough ridicule, or enough taunts and jeers, they will get the mastery over you. Now is your time to play the man! You are taken, as it were, a prisoner of war, but do not forfeit your honor by voluntarily serving with or aiding the enemy! They want a song from you, do they? Well then, sing them one of the songs about Jesus and they will soon want you to stop! But do not yield to their desire by singing the song of the worldling, even if you know one. If you are Christ's true soldier, you will be most faithful in the hour of the greatest trial. But you will need to cry to the Strong for strength and ask God to give you sufficient Grace for every time of need.

Christian tradesmen are sometimes taken prisoners of war in this sense. They get into financial difficulties and then it is suggested to them by Satan, “You must do such-and-such—you cannot help doing it. Of course you would rather not do it, but, under the circumstances, you cannot help yourself!” Do not do wrong, my Brother, whatever the circumstances may be! Become a bankrupt, lose all that you have and go to the workhouse rather than do the least wrong! It would be better to die in a ditch than to live and be rich with a guilty conscience! As you love your Lord, I beseech you, by that precious blood of His that has redeemed you from all iniquity, do not “crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame,” but stand fast! And having done all, still stand. God help any of you who are thus taken prisoners of war to avoid doing anything willingly against your Prince and thus aiding His enemy!

(6). *“Knowingly does, when on active service, any act calculated to imperil the success of Her Majesty's forces or any part thereof.”*

That is rather a strong clause because it takes a very wide sweep. But, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we must not knowingly do anything calculated to imperil the success of our Master's cause. Will you try to think what a comprehensive clause this is? It may be that what you do will not actually imperil the success of Christ's cause. You may be too insignificant for your act to have any very great result, but still, if it is even calculated to have that effect, it is forbidden by the articles of war of Prince Emmanuel!

I will tell you of some things that I think are calculated to imperil the success of our Master's cause. There are some of you who have never been baptized and who are not members of any Christian Church. “Well,” someone says, “I believe that I am a Christian and that I can go to Hea-

ven without being baptized, or joining a Church, or even going to the Communion Table." Yes, I know that is what you think, but that course of conduct of yours is, in my opinion, calculated to imperil the success of Christ's cause! If it is right for you to act thus, then every other Christian has as much right to act thus as you have—and suppose that everybody were to do as you are doing—that would be an end to the visible Church of Christ and to the maintenance of the visible ordinances of Christ—and this would be most perilous to the success of Christ's cause! Just think of that, I pray you, and if you are leaving undone that which you ought to do, or are doing anything which has a tendency to imperil the success of Christ's cause, repent of it and forsake it, lest it should turn out that, after all, you are not a loyal subject and soldier in the army of King Jesus!—

***“Put on the Gospel armor,
And watching unto prayer,
Where duty calls, or danger,
Be never wanting there.”***

(7). *“Misbehaves or induces others to misbehave before the enemy.”*

I do not quite know what “misbehavior” of a soldier may mean, but I know that a Christian should never misbehave, because he is always in the presence of the enemy. You must never say, “Oh, now, you know, I may do what I like for there is nobody looking.” Is there not? Your great Captain is certainly looking—and it is frequently when men think they are least seen that they are the most observed! The world has an eagle's eye for a Christian's faults! It tries to see faults where there are none—and where there are small faults, it is sure to magnify them! For my part, I am very glad it is so, and I say, let the world watch us—it will help us to be the more exact in our conduct! If we are ashamed to be seen anywhere, it must be because we have good reason to be ashamed! Let us endeavor to live so that we need not be ashamed—

***“Lord I desire to live as one
Who bears a blood-bought name.
As one who fears but grieving You
And knows no other shame.
As one by whom Your walk below
Should never be forgot—
As one who gladly would keep apart
From all You love not.”***

When I was pastor at Waterbeach there was a young man who joined the Church and who seemed to run well for a time. But the village feast came round and there was a good deal of drunkenness and all sorts of low merriment. The young man went into the dancehall, but he had not been there many minutes before someone came to him and said, “Don't you belong to Spurgeon?” He tried to deny it, but there were many others who knew it was true and, before long he was thrown out of a window. The *world* pitched him out as a hypocrite! And shortly afterwards, the

Church also turned him out as a hypocrite, so that he was disowned by both the Church and the world. And I think that by the Grace of God, this led him to a hearty and true repentance. I was thankful that the worldlings kept such a watch over the members of my Church that they would not see them acting wrongly without making them suffer for it! And I hope they will serve you in the same way if any of you try to act as that young man did. You must be one thing or the other—either wholly for Christ or wholly for His enemies! If you are not prepared to be out-and-out for Jesus Christ, do not pretend to enlist in His army. If you want to “hold with the hare, and run with the hounds,” we shall certainly not ask you to join our ranks. There must be nothing of this kind of spirit among good soldiers of Jesus Christ. May God keep us free from it!

(8). *“Leaves his commanding officer to go in search of plunder.”*

Oh, dear! Have I not known some who professed to be soldiers in Christ's army who have done this? They thought there was something to be gained elsewhere, so they left Christ in “search of plunder.” There was one who did this in Paul's day, of whom the Apostle wrote, “Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world.” “Oh, but,” says one, “would you not have me marry when there was money to be had, even though it was to a worldly man?” Or, “an ungodly woman?” You can do so if you want to leave Christ “to go in search of plunder.” “Would you not have me take a job where I could get several hundreds of pounds a year even though I had to mix with ungodly men, and to do unrighteous things?” O you mean-spirited wretch, how little are you worthy to be numbered among those who are descended from the martyrs for the Truth of God! How little are you worthy to be among those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes! The Lord teaches those who are really His people that “godliness with contentment is great gain” and, therefore, for Christ's sake, they can afford to despise and lose all other so-called “gain”!

“But,” says one, “I don't know where we should be if we were so scrupulous and exact as that.” I can tell you where you would be—you would be walking in the light as God is in the light, and you would have fellowship with Him—and you would be no loser by acting thus, but you would be a gainer all round, for Christ has assured you that no one shall leave houses, or lands, or husband, or wife, or children for the Kingdom's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time and, in the world to come, life everlasting! If you cannot lose for Christ, you have already lost Christ, for He said, “Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.” He who loves the world better than Christ loves not Christ at all! God save us from being of that character!

Time would fail me if I mentioned all the offenses specified in this list, so I will pass on to number 15 in the Act—

(15). *“By discharging firearms, drawing swords, beating drums, making signals, using words, or by any means whatever intentionally occasions false alarms in action, on the march, in the field, or elsewhere.”*

It is a very great sin on the part of Christian soldiers to make false alarms to discourage and dispirit their fellow soldiers. There are some professors who seem to delight to tell us of a new discovery in science which is supposed to destroy our faith. Science makes a wonderful discovery and straightaway we are expected to doubt what is plainly revealed in the Word of God! Considering that the so-called “science” is continually changing and that it seems to be the rule for scientific men to contradict all who have gone before them—and that if you take up a book upon almost any science, you will find that it largely consists of repudiations of all former theories—I think we can afford to wait until the scientific men have made up their minds as to what science really is! In any event, we have no cause to be distressed concerning science, so let no Christian’s heart fail him—and let him not raise any alarm in the camp of Christ!

Some raise these alarms by slandering their fellow Christians. I will say very few words about this matter, but they must be very strong ones. That man is grossly guilty who makes up a lie or who reports a lie against one who is his Brother or Sister in Christ. We are all faulty enough, but let us go with the mantle of charity and cover up the faults of others and never expose them. Those who raise false alarms of this sort deserve to be tried by court martial and to receive some very exemplary punishment for such a grave offense!

(16). *“Treacherously makes known the password to any person not entitled to receive it; or, without good and sufficient cause, gives a password different from what he received.”*

It is a great crime to give the wrong password to Christ’s army. Our password is, “blood.” It is an offensive word to many people, but we know that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. I pray God that every stone of this Tabernacle may tumble to its ruin and every timber be splintered to atoms before there should stand on this platform a man to preach who denies the substitutionary Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, or who even keeps it in the background, for this is our password! You shall know us among all professors by the emphasis which we lay upon Atonement by the blood of Jesus Christ! Of the redeemed in Glory we read, “These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” And the saints on earth join in John’s Doxology, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” “The precious blood of Jesus” is our password in life,

and the password with which we hope to enter through the gates of death into eternal Glory and blessedness—

***“Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Is saved to sin no more.”***

Further on in this list, I notice another suggestive crime—

(18). *“Being a sentinel, commits any of the following offenses; that is to say, sleeps or is drunk on his post; or leaves his post before he is regularly relieved.”*

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” And this is one of the duties of every Christian, for all Christ's soldiers are sentinels, watchmen on the walls of Zion! Then again, it is our duty not to leave our post till we are regularly relieved. Do you not think that some teachers leave the Sunday school before they are regularly relieved? I think they do. There are some who get tired of the work and leave it. I do not think you can truthfully say that you are regularly relieved of any work until you find a suitable successor—and I hope that some of us will never be regularly relieved until we close our eyes in death. Our prayer is that we may die in harness—

***“Our body with our charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live.”***

Who wishes to be regularly relieved from Christ's service except it is by receiving his crown and entering into his rest?—

***“The land of triumph lies on high,
There are no fields of battle there!
Lord, I would conquer till I die
And finish all the glorious war.
Let every flying hour confess
I gain Your Gospel fresh renown!
And when my life and labors cease,
May I possess the promised crown!”***

Still further on, I notice that this is put down—

(23). *“Disobeys any lawful command given by his superior officer in the execution of his office.”*

I know of only one superior Officer in Christ's army, and that is our blessed Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation! He said to His disciples, “One is your Master; even Christ, and all you are brethren.” And He also said to them, “A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” Mind that you do not disobey that command of your superior Officer—“Love one another.” Be true brethren to one another. You know that when Jesus had washed His disciples' feet, He said to them, “If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you, also, ought to wash one another's feet.” Imitate this action of your Captain by rendering any service that you can to those who are your Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Seek their good for edification and be not easily provoked,

but abound in that charity which “thinks no evil; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

Keep every command of your Master. I put the question to the conscience of everyone of you who profess to be Christ's soldiers. Is there any one of His commands that you know of that you have not kept? I will not mention one even if I could do so, but I ask you whether there is one command of Christ which you know is His command, which you have not kept? You may think that the command is only a little one, but the spirit which thinks it is little is not a little evil, but a great evil! If you get a small stone in your boot, you know how it affects you in walking—and a little thing on the conscience, no matter how little it is, causes great trouble in a Christian's life. Blisters, very painful ones, will be upon the spiritual foot if there is either an omission or a commission that is knowingly indulged in contrary to the command of Christ. We are not saved by our works, but when we are saved, we are saved from sin, saved from disobedience, saved from unholiness, saved from selfishness— saved in order that we may live no longer unto ourselves but unto Him that loved us and gave Himself for us.

(25 & 26). The last two articles in the list are these—“*Deserts or attempts to desert from Her Majesty's Service; persuades, endeavors to persuade, procures, or attempts to procure any person subject to military law to desert from Her Majesty's Service.*”

Brothers and Sisters, you and I, when we enlisted in Christ's army, entered it for life, did we not? I never believed in any system of salvation which comes to an end. There are some who believe that you may be saved today and lost tomorrow. Well, if they like that sort of salvation, they are welcome to it! I do not want it, nor would I have it as a gift. But the salvation that I received when I believed in Jesus Christ was everlasting salvation—that salvation of which the Apostle writes to the Hebrews, “that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” Many of us, like Paul, bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Does anyone ask, “Where are those marks?” Well, some of us have the watermark which has been buried with Christ by Baptism into death. That is the outside mark. And then in our hearts we have another mark which the Spirit put upon us in that day when we passed from death unto life by His regenerating power. If these marks are really on us and in us, we shall never desert from our Lord's service, but shall be faithful even unto death!

Possibly there is someone here who has turned back in the day of battle and become a deserter. Where are you, my Friend? I am glad to see you once more, for it is a long while since you were last here. You used to be a member of the Church and you made a great profession, but you know where you have been lately—you have been serving Satan. May

God help you to desert from the devil's service and may you never go back to it again! If you ever were the servant of God, return, O Backslider, and return at once!—

***“Return, O wanderer, to your home,
Your Father calls for thee!
No longer now an exile roam
In guilt and misery—
Return, return!”***

He that has been a mere professor and has turned back, must be branded, “Deserter.” No, not on his flesh, but on his conscience, seared as with a hot iron! Some desert because they have grown rich and can no longer associate with poor Christian people. Some desert because they have become poor and they say they have no clothes fit to come in, as if any sort of clothes were needed beyond such as might cover a man decently! Any clothes, if they are paid for, are fit to wear to this place of worship! But let those who say they are too poor to come, remember that it is in poverty and in sickness that a man most needs the Gospel and, therefore, the lower he gets in the world, the more closely he ought to cling to Christ! Yet, alas, there are some who desert because of poverty, and some because of wealth. O you deserters, may the Lord have mercy upon you and grant that you may not be real deserters, but may come back to the colors! Our Great Captain is ready to receive you and to forgive you, for He says, “Him that come to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Yes, even though you are a deserter, if you do but come to Christ, He will receive you graciously, love you freely and His anger shall be turned away from you. God bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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

TAKING POSSESSION OF OUR INHERITANCE

NO. 2086

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 12, 1889,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.”
Joshua 1:2, 3.

UNDER the leadership of Moses the children of Israel had been journeying towards the land of promise. Owing to their waywardness, what might have been done in less than a month occupied many years. They wandered up and down in the wilderness, sometimes close on the border of their inheritance and other times lost in the great desert. Alas, many of God's people are still in this unsatisfactory condition—they have come out of Egypt—the depths have swallowed up their adversaries and they are on the way to the promised heritage. But they have not yet entered into rest. They will, we trust, ultimately reach the peace of God which passes all understanding, for they have sufficient faith to prove them to be God's people and therefore, the Lord will surely bring them in.

But, assuredly, they make a great deal of marching for very small progress. For lack of faith they go about when, with a step, they might possess the promised Canaan. Today my earnest prayer and desire is that going towards the promised heritage may come to an end with you this day and you may enter into heavenly blessings in Christ Jesus by an immediate act of faith. I want the Lord's people so to persevere in their seeking, by Divine strength, that they may get out of the great and terrible wilderness and come to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem and enter into their heritage, according to that word, “We which have believed do enter into rest.”

Our friends have come as far as that first verse of our Lord's invitation, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” And they have a measure of that rest which comes of pardoned sin and confidence in Jesus. The pity is that they have not advanced to His next word of exhortation, “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me: and you shall find rest unto your souls.” This is a rest discovered and enjoyed through willing service—“You shall find rest unto your souls.” Many people are saved in one sense but in another sense they are seeking salvation.

Oh that we may come to be saved in *every* sense—may salvation be ours in the broadest, widest, deepest, highest meaning of that blessed

word! May we not only be saved *from* but saved *to*! Saved *from sin*—that makes us safe. Saved *to holiness*—that makes us happy. May we realize our completeness in Christ this day and cease from the wanderings of fear! It is time that we took possession of that goodly heritage which the Lord has made our own, for in Christ Jesus “we have obtained an inheritance” and have the earnest of it in our possession of the Spirit of God. Hear the watchword of the morning, you that have tarried long enough in the wilderness—“Arise, go over this Jordan”!

If I read the whole verse it is a command to myself—“Arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.” For our help in this desirable step, first let us take a survey of the inheritance. Secondly, let us glance at the title deeds. And thirdly, let us make a move towards taking immediate possession. For all this may the Holy Spirit make us sufficient!

I. First LET US TAKE A SURVEY OF THE INHERITANCE. I cannot carry you to the top of Pisgah. And if I could, you would probably reckon that you ought to die there. Your time has not yet come for that journey to the sky—but I would invite you to view the purchased possession with the eye of an enlightened understanding and then to cross over the Jordan of indecision to possess the country.

I would say of this inheritance which God has prepared for His saints and has given to them by a Covenant of Salt that it is exceedingly broad. We read here in this Book of Joshua, “From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.” These people did not conquer all the country but were content with the narrow bounds of Canaan. They began their enterprise bravely but soon showed a contracted spirit.

Moses, in the 34th chapter of Numbers, which is well worthy of careful reading, gave them a little map or ordnance survey of the inner country which they were commanded to conquer and out of which they were to drive the inhabitants with the edge of the sword. The various races of Canaanites had brought upon themselves the curse of a righteous God. Their existence upon the face of God’s earth had become a calamity to mankind by reason of their horrible vices. They were doomed to utter extinction by the justice of God, as other races have been whose story profane history records. The Israelites were appointed to be their executioners. But they did not accomplish their task—after a little while they began to make treaties and marriages with the doomed people and their intended victims became thorns in their sides.

Outside of these Canaanite nations were greater territories which stretched right away from the Lebanon ranges down to the border of Egypt and as far east as the great river Euphrates, from whose banks their fathers came. This large domain was never altogether conquered by Israel although David possessed a large portion of it and Solomon still more. The

people of these wide regions were not so far gone in evil as the degraded tribes of Canaan and so they were to be spared, if they submitted to the sway of Israel. Even the inner kingdom Israel did not wholly subdue—and the wider region it left for centuries untouched.

Beloved, this is a sadly correct picture of what happens to numbers of God's people today. The inheritance that God has given us to enjoy in Christ Jesus is exceedingly broad. But we limit ourselves. All that we can think or desire is ours in the Covenant of Grace. There are immeasurable breadths and lengths, but we confine ourselves to close quarters. Truly "there is very much land yet to be possessed"! Some Divine Graces you must have, or you are not saved. Some sins must at once be driven out of your life at the sword's point or you are not the Lord's. As for the choicer Graces—you are foolish, indeed, if you think of doing without them! And as for the less violent *sins*—you err greatly if you spare one of them.

The deep knowledge, the spiritual experience, the high joy, the extreme delight, and the heavenly communion which fall to the lot of certain of the saints should be enjoyed by us all. There is no reason why one should miss them. For if they have but faith enough to grasp all that God gives, they have full permission to do so. The Lord may truly say to us, "You are not straitened in Me but you are straitened in your own heart." We are petty princelings when we might have an imperial inheritance.

Just let me show what I mean. When we at first come to Christ by faith, we begin to enter into our inheritance for we obtain the pardon of sin. Some Believers are not even sure that they have a present and perfect remission—but some of us know that we are, once and for all, "washed in the blood of the Lamb." We know, therefore, in God's eyes we are whiter than snow. But beyond that lies "acceptance in the Beloved," which possibly we have not dared to claim. Hosts of professors are satisfied to be washed but have not yet asked to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Beloved, we are not only absolved but we are positively delightful unto God in Christ Jesus. He accepts our offerings, our prayers, our praises, our heart's love. Our name is Hephzibah, for the Lord delights in us.

Pardon of sin is like the little Canaan that must be conquered. But why not advance to the wider regions of "accepted in the Beloved"? Brethren, let us walk in the light, as God is in the light and have fellowship with Him while the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans us from all sin.

Think of another great blessing, namely, that of sonship. Beloved, we could sing heartily that hymn just now—

***"Behold what wondrous grace
The Father has bestowed
On sinners of a mortal race,
To call them sons of God!"***

But sonship is not all—"If children, then heirs, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." Adoption you *must* have—heirship you ought to have. How rich you are since God Himself is yours—"heirs of God"! Yes, God Himself is as truly yours as He is Christ's—"joint-heirs with Jesus Christ."

Why are we naked and poor and miserable when we are heirs of a kingdom by reason of our adoption of the Lord? Let us take the good the Lord provides us.

Consider now the matter of regeneration. When we come to Christ by faith we are born again and made new creatures in Christ Jesus—this must be. But, Brethren, when we are born again we perceive that the new birth begets a new life and that new life develops itself in the beauty of holiness. *Holiness* is the fruit of regeneration. Yet some imagine that they cannot be holy, at least not to any great extent. They believe that they can be saved from certain grosser evils but they cannot ascend to those glorious heights of consecration and sanctification without which the Believer can never attain to the stature of a man in Christ Jesus. My message to you is, Arise, go over this Jordan and take possession of the larger inheritance. Take possession of it all—seek after holiness—follow on to know the Lord.

Be not satisfied until you are conformed unto His image, who is “the First-born among many Brethren.” Aspire to the utmost God can give. You have not seen the goodly heights of Lebanon. As yet you are satisfied to stop at Jericho, by the river’s brink, as if the conquest of one city had satisfied you. Gird on your harness and go forth to the fight—for the Lord is with you and the land is before you.

Again, as soon as a man has believed in Jesus he is safe. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ you are born of God. And, being born of God you come under the Divine wing and the Lord shall preserve you from all evil. Many are satisfied that this is true but they do not, therefore, enter into peace as they should. That undisturbed serenity which springs from a sense of perfect safety in Christ Jesus is a glorious domain into which they do not enter. Our soul is made by faith to be as calm as the lake upon a summer’s evening when the surface is unbroken by a ripple. Alas, we give way at times to doubt and fear and hardly know whether we are the Lord’s people or not. This must not go on. We must have faith.

But we may have, and we ought to have, the full assurance of faith. In full assurance lies the spring of perpetual serenity. The Lord can create in us habitual calm—in the midst of trouble He can give us joy. In the hour of struggle He can give us confidence. Oh rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him—then shall your times be free from disturbance and your days as the days of Heaven upon the earth. It may be so if you have Divine Grace enough to claim the whole of the wide territory which the Lord has allotted you. Oh, for Divine Grace to cry—“Gilead is mine and Manasseh is mine! Over Edom will I cast out my shoe. Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom?” God will bring us where unaided nature can never enter.

Once more—when we come to Christ by faith we have communion with God. And this is a land that flows with milk and honey. Out of communion comes usefulness and there are certain ones who fancy that they can never be very useful. The Lord cannot do many mighty works through them because of their unbelief. They have to be fed with a spoon

like invalid children. If they had but faith enough to receive power from on high by fuller communion with God they might become as David. There is no limit to the possibilities of usefulness in *any* man or woman when perfectly consecrated. Let us not imagine that we are doomed to small usefulness. That branch of the vine which up to now has yielded little or no fruit may yet be made by the heavenly Vinedresser to bring forth much fruit.

By faith let the Divine sap of Grace be received. Let living Graces bring the living Christ into us and then we shall bring forth clusters large as those which the spies brought from Eshcol of old. Thus much, then, concerning our survey of the goodly heritage of salvation. The land of promise is exceedingly broad.

Next, it is exceedingly desirable. The country into which Israel entered was of a very choice kind. Travelers in Palestine tell us that it is the world condensed. Within that narrow strip of territory you get plains and hills, frosts of winter and heats of summer. You find products both of semitropical and temperate zones. Palestine is the whole earth in miniature and all the advantages of all lands are gathered into it. It was, in Joshua's days, a place of extreme fertility—"A land that flows with milk and honey." Nor was this all—while it was fertile on the surface it was rich underneath.

It was a land "whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you may dig brass." The useful metals were near at hand as was every other convenience. Besides being fertile and wealthy it was prepared for immediate habitation. The tribes had not to build houses—they inhabited what others had built. They had not to plant vineyards but to eat the fruit of former labors. All things were waiting for the true heirs of the land. Beloved, when faith gets her heritage in Christ, she is brought into a wealthy place. When sin is driven out and we come to live in God's own land, then we find precious treasure. We dig and we are enriched. We have all things in Christ—yes, in Him we have all that our utmost want can require. As He has gone into Heaven to prepare a place for us—so on earth He has already prepared—in the Covenant of Grace, everything that is needed for the way home. Why do we not take possession of that which He has prepared for us?

This heritage upon which we are now looking down from the summit of our faith is full of variety. In Palestine there were fertile plains and rich valleys between rising hills and towering mountains. It was a land of brooks and rivers, a land which the Lord God thought upon. It was, in those days, the joy of all the earth—it was as the garden of the Lord for exceeding excellency. Beloved, if you come to Christ you shall never need to go away from Him to find variety of joys. In His teaching you shall find Lebanons of sublime doctrine and Sharons of pleasant precept. Here are Hermons of experience, Tabors of communion, Jabboks of prevailing prayer and Cheriths of Divine Providence.

The revelation of God is a blessed country, full of all manner of delights. They that live in Christ dwell in spiritual realms which for light and joy

are as Heaven below. Above all things, it is “your land, O Immanuel!” That is the dearest name for the Canaan of Divine Grace. The saints’ inheritance is the choicest form of life and peace and joy. We come to live *with Christ, in Christ, for Christ, as Christ*—we rise in Him to fellowship with the Father and with the Church of the First-born. One heart sympathizes with all the purposes of God and we joy in God Himself. I cannot properly describe all this but I live in the enjoyment of it. We live through our Lord and with our Lord. And this is life eternal. This is “the life which is life, indeed.”

Compared with it, all other life is death. Divine Grace is Glory in the bud—it will be full-blown by-and-by. This privilege is enjoyed none the less because of daily affliction, bodily pain, opposition and reproach—it may even be enjoyed all the more because of these—if they are borne for Jesus’ sake. Our light afflictions are like the black shadows of a picture which throw up the bright lights and set them out more vividly. Christ Jesus becomes more and more precious to us when we have a straitness of earthly things. Yet this promised portion may be enjoyed if we have abundance of earthly things. God may multiply your possessions. And if he gives you more of Himself at the same time, they will not harm you.

As you find all in God when you are poor, you shall find God in all when you are rich. Your life consists not in what you possess, nor in what you lack. You shall find in Christ a fullness, a soul-filling satisfaction. And this shall be a pledge of that something better which the Beloved has laid up in store for a still brighter day. What a word is that where we read of being “filled with all the fullness of God”! I do not think any man can exaggerate the possibilities that lie before Believers. If any man shall draw a line and say he can go no further, I must take leave to blot out that line—where God has set no bound we will not allow a stop, lest we be found guilty of limiting the Holy One of Israel—

***“All our capacious powers can wish
In Christ does richly meet.”***

All that is in Christ is meant for all Believers and therefore all Believers may have all that is in Christ who is All in All. We should not be content with pennies when He endows us with pounds. No child of God could ever yet say, “I have taken all that God can give me and still I am wanting more.” God All-Sufficient is our heritage and He more than fills our deepest need, our highest aspiration. Thus have we surveyed our measureless inheritance.

II. I beg you, in the next place TO GLANCE AT THE TITLE DEEDS OF OUR INHERITANCE. We shall not require a lawyer to assist us in our examination. But if there should be here a legal critic who would like to overhaul our papers, he is welcome to do so. I would not mind exhibiting our title before the whole bench of judges, for it has no flaw in it and will stand in the highest court—yes, even in the last judgment. I have pleaded this incomparable title in several courts already and it has been found to convey to me a valid gift. Here is the title deed, “The land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.” It is repeated further on, “Every

place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." This is an abstract of our title.

First, notice its Covenant character. "I have given it to you." The Lord had given it to them from of old when He promised it to their father Abraham. When the deep sleep fell upon Abraham and he saw the vision of the burning lamp and the smoking furnace, then the Lord gave to him the wide domain and He mentions in detail all the tribes which then held the inner circle. You will find the full conveyance in the 15th chapter of Genesis, beginning at the 18th verse—"Unto your seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites and the Kenizzites and the Kadmonites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Rephaims and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

Thus they came into possession by an ancient deed of gift which entailed it upon them from generation to generation. I am glad that our tenure of the kingdom of Divine Grace is ancient and well established and that it is not so much with us, directly, as with One infinitely greater, with whom it stands fast forever. Had the Covenant been made with me, individually, I should fear that my unworthiness would corrupt it. But it is made with One whose name forbids all fear of forfeiture. The Covenant of Grace is not made with you or with me individually because of our personal righteousness. But it is made with our Covenant Head and Representative whose life and death have sealed and ratified it.

As the Lord could never run back from His promise to righteous Abraham, "In you and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," so will He never return from His promise which He gave to us in our blessed Covenant Head. He has given us an inheritance by an act of Sovereign Grace and not because of any goodness in ourselves. His gift will never be recalled since the ground of it never alters. Each Believer may say, "He has in Christ Jesus made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: and therefore do I possess all spiritual blessings and shall possess them world without end."

Observe, next, that this deed of gift is notable for its graciousness. What does it say? Which I do *sell* to them? Ah, no, it is no *sale* but a *free gift*. Does it say, "Which I do *offer* to them if they will earn it"? No, no—it is a present unconditional grant of sovereign love. Nothing is freer than a gift—"the gift of God is eternal life." He has given us all things for nothing, that we might behold the exceeding riches of His Grace. Note well the righteousness of our title—"Which I do *give* to them." The Lord God has a right to give what He pleases, for "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof. The world and they that dwell therein."

Of His own has He given unto us. In the great sacrifice of His dear Son He has satisfied all claims of justice and He acts justly when He blesses largely those for whom Jesus died. When a man has the free hold of his land, he has a right to give it away if so it pleases him—the Most High God is possessor of all things and when He says to His people, "I give you this," who shall dispute His right? The blessings of the Covenant of Grace are a

royal gift—they come to us by Divine right. Who shall question Jehovah's will? He asks peremptorily, "Shall I not do as I will with My own?" That which Divine Grace has given us is ours by a surer title than anything else can ever be.

Do not fail to see its sureness. He not only says, "I have given it," and in some other places, "I *will* give it," but He declares "I *do* give it." God gives Christ and His Grace to us every day. The blessings of the Covenant are continually fresh gifts of His hand. By two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie, He has given the Covenant possessions to us and if it were to be done again He would do it without hesitation. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." "I do give," says He, and thus He stands to His act and deed. O children of God, what do you think of your title deeds? You stand possessed of your kingdom by the gift of Him who has a right to give what He pleases. The kingdom is given to you because it is your Father's good pleasure to give it to you. Not only was it his good pleasure but it remains so.

What great simpletons we are if we do not take possession of the brave country which is ceded to us! Does God give and do we decline to accept? Does God give and do we let the blessing lie untouched? O Sheep, you well deserve to starve if you will not feed on the pastures into which the Good Shepherd leads you. The highest privileges of the Covenant of Grace are not the monopoly of advanced saints—they are the common property of all Believers. A habit is growing up of saying, "Such-and-such a man is a saint." And then you set him up in a niche after the fashion of Rome. Are you not also a saint? You will never enter Heaven unless you are. If you are a saint, why not take a saint's inheritance?

"Oh, but certain chosen ones are the Lord's favorites!" What? Has He not also chosen you and favored you? If not, it will go hard with you. Well then, being yourselves favored and chosen, why do you not take hold upon the glorious estate which belongs to the chosen family? No part of Scripture is of private interpretation—no bit of the promised country may be hedged in as the peculiar portion of a few. It all belongs to *all* the redeemed if they have but faith to make it their own. Do not hedge about the words spoken of the Lord and say, "Ah, He said that to Jacob." Does not the Lord tell us by His servant Hosea that, "He found *him* in Bethel and there he spoke with *us*"? (Hosea 12:4).

Although choice words were first of all spoken to this man or that, yet were they spoken for *all believing people* throughout all time. In the holy heritage all who have Christ have all that Christ brings with Him. "If children, then heirs"—not if grown-up children, not if comely children, nor if vigorous children but—"if children, then heirs." If you are not children, what will become of you? But "if children, then heirs." Come, Brethren, bestir yourselves and claim your heirship. Take possession of the whole territory of Divine Grace which the Lord has dedicated to your use!

III. Now I have brought you to the third point—LET US MAKE A MOVE TOWARDS OUR POSSESSION. There is your land but Jordan rolls between. The first thing to do in this matter is to go over this Jordan.

What do we mean? Out in the wilderness as a seeker, whose faith does not enter in, you are like a sheep which wanders from the fold and you find little rest. You are apt to be numbered with the Bedouin of the desert and not with the people of the Lord.

Come out from the world and be separate. The land of gracious experience is meant for you to dwell in so that you may be recognized as the Lord's peculiar people, separated unto the Most High. Are you ready to come right out—to be settled in Immanuel's land—to break every link with "the world which lies in wickedness"? I have heard a great deal of talk about this separation but I have seen these very talkers hesitate when the decisive act of separation from false doctrine and unholy living has been expected of them. I pray you hear the Divine voice which cries, "Come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord and touch not the unclean thing. And I will receive you and will be a Father unto you and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

It is required of you in order to your full entrance into the Grace state, that you take up a decided stand on the Lord's side. On the other side of Jordan is your portion and not in the Wilderness of Sin. Did I hear you say to yourself, "Suppose I am beaten?" Well, you cannot retreat from the land for there is no bridge over the Jordan. The river effectually bars all retreat. Are you willing to make a life decision? Will you draw the sword and burn the scabbard? It is death or glory with you. May you have Divine Grace to take the one irreversible step and be the Lord's—wholly and only—forever! You can never take the kingdom of Divine Grace until with deliberate resolve you quit the sand of the desert for the soil of Canaan.

A balloon cannot go up into the sky until the last rope is cut. Oh, for that sharp, decisive step, by which, like Abraham, you come out from your father's house that you may be a sojourner with God in the land which His Grace will show you!

Having decided for the Lord, you are next to take possession by an act of simple faith. The Lord says to you, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." This is an easy way of taking land—to put your foot down upon it. I delight in that Word of the Lord to Jacob when he lay asleep, "The land whereon you lie, to you will I give it and to your seed." If you can, by faith, lie down on a promise and find rest in it, it is yours. Every place in the Grace country upon which the sole of your foot shall tread is yours. You will remember that the Red Indians agreed to sell to William Penn as much land as a man could walk round in a day.

And I do not wonder that at the end of the day they complained that the white brother had made a big walk. I think I should have put my best leg foremost, if whatever I could put my foot upon would be mine—would not you? Why, then, do you not hurry up in *spiritual* matters? Do you value earthly things more than spiritual? Mark, then, that if you put your foot down upon a blessing and say, "This is mine," it is yours. What a very simple operation is the claim of faith! You do not have to pass through the Universities to learn that—it is grasping with the hand or appropriating

with the foot. Many of the Lord's poor and unlearned ones obtain more from the promises than the more cultured ever do.

The learned man lifts his head up, but the simple put their foot down. And this last is the way to the inheritance. By criticism you may put your foot *in* it, but by faith you put your foot *on* it. Strangers find fault, children claim. He that can trust his Lord may say, "In the name of the living God this blessing is mine." Come, then, Brothers and Sisters, if there is a need for more holiness, put your foot on it. If you need more happiness, put your foot on it. If more usefulness is what you want, put your foot on it. Lay your claim to all that is put within your reach in Scripture. This is the victory that overcomes the world and conquers Canaan—our faith.

But the Canaanite was there! Yes, I know. But you see, he had no right there—the Lord had outlawed him. The land was Israel's by the Lord's gift and they had a right to fight for the possession of their own estates. They first put their foot on it and it was theirs. And then they said to the aboriginal Canaanites, "Clear out!" The old nations had forfeited their lease through breach of covenant and they were, therefore, to give up possession to the incoming tenants, whose right was indefeasible. God's people are in conflict with sin and they carry out this war vigorously when they have first seen their right to the blessings of Divine Grace as given them by the living God.

You may not claim a piece of land unless you are sure that it is really yours. You are a thief if you do. But when you are sure that an estate is rightfully yours, then you commence your action and strive to win it. In spiritual things waive no spiritual right. Say to sin that now mars your peace, "Peace is mine, clear out!" Say to sin that stops your usefulness, "That usefulness is mine, I claim it—clear out! "Hivite, Jebusite, Girgashite—whatever sort of fellow you are—clear out of my heart and life for holiness is mine. God, the Sovereign Possessor of all things has given us our redeemed nature, to have and to hold for His Glory and we mean to have it!

Each blessing is yours since you put the foot of faith upon it. But the actual enjoyment of it will need a struggle. War! War! War! With every Canaanite! Break their images and cut down their groves. They must be driven out at the sword's point. You have God's help with you in this holy battle. Your warfare will be accomplished, for the Lord Himself has said, "There shall not any man be able to stand before you all the days of your life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not fail you, nor forsake you."

I long to encourage you, my Friends, to carry on this sacred crusade. I would have you grasp all which the hand of Love holds out to you. Need I urge you? If there is such need, you are in a sorry way. I do not believe that if I should read from this pulpit that my friend John Smith had been left five thousand acres of land, I should have to follow him home to persuade him to go and look at it. If my Sister yonder received a notification that a very nice little estate had been left her in the country, I

do not believe I would need beg her to look after it. She would take an early train tomorrow morning to go and look over her farm.

Brothers and Sisters, here is an inheritance so broad and wide and lasting—why do you not hasten to take it? There is holiness, do you not want it? There is serenity, do you not desire it? There is joy unspeakable and full of glory, do you not wish for it? There is usefulness, do you not hunger for it? This is the reason why some are so indifferent—they are ignorant—they do not even know that these choice blessings are to be had. All that any child of God was, you may be. All the joy and bliss and holiness ever enjoyed on earth, you may enjoy. The land is before you—go in and possess it. Do not be without the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord, for in Him is “joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Some of our dear friends hear a doctrine which is Gospel and water. And they really do not know what the undiluted Gospel is. The Doctrines of Grace are the cream which many cautious preachers skim from the milk of the Word lest it should prove too rich for the stomachs of their hearers. A solid portion of Calvinistic doctrine is like a joint of nourishing meat and the people of this generation are such babes that they cannot digest it. “It is too rich for me!” cries one. I know it, I know it. But I pray the Lord to make you grow into men who can enjoy the fat things full of marrow and the wines on the lees well refined.

There are glorious Truths of God of which beginners know nothing and through not knowing of them they miss much joy. Full many a child of God goes fretting and worrying when he ought to be singing and rejoicing and would be so if he knew what God has provided for him. Many do not possess the land because of unbelief—

“Alas, it seems too good to be true”

“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all.”

Yes, that is quite true. But are you going to sing that one line forever? Is that your style of singing—one line forever? If our leader, just now, when we sang the hymn, had kept on with—“Behold, what wondrous grace!” “Behold, what wondrous grace!” it would have been very sweet—but I should have pulled his coat-tail and said, “Go on with the whole verse.”

So, in this case, you say—“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all.” Why not go on to sing—

“But Jesus Christ is my All in All”?

You are empty but Jesus fills you. You are in prison but Jesus sets you at liberty. Why not rejoice in that liberty? The Lord deliver us from unbelief for it is enough to shut any man out of the inheritance! And many are indolent, Oh, the laziness of some of God’s people! I will not enlarge upon this matter, probably you know something about it yourselves.

Lastly, the indecision of a great many is another cause why they do not possess the land. There is a hesitancy to go up and seize it. They mean to be better Christians before they die. I wonder how many Christians here would like to finish their lives today! Would your life, if now ended, be a life worth living? Suppose it were now threatened to be cut short. Would you not pray with anguish, “Lord, let me live a little longer, that I may

distribute more of my money to Your cause, may bear better testimony to Your Truth and may set my house in order”? Set your house in order at once, my Brothers and Sisters. Give away a full portion of your substance immediately. Begin to work for Jesus at once. Why should you hesitate? You blame the sinner when he delays—surely the saint is to be blamed, too, when he also lingers.

I have done when I have said to any soul here that is seeking the Lord—if you today come in and accept the blessings of the Covenant, you may have them and welcome. Do not say to yourself, “It will be a presumptuous thing for me to believe in Jesus.” It will be a kind of presumption which has no sin in it. If a rich man, in one of the famine-stricken districts of China were to say to his servant, “Provide a great feast and set it out in the street.” And he were then to put up a notice to hungry Chinamen, “Whosoever will may come,” I do not think that if I were a hungry Chinaman, I should keep away from the dinner from fear of presumption. I should go gladly and ask no questions—for my stomach’s sake—if for nothing else.

O poor, doubting Sinner, you had better do the same. Feed freely and fear not. When God’s cry is, “Come and welcome,” come at once and ask no questions. Or if a question does arise, let your hunger answer and tell you that you must. God gives His Grace freely—freely take it. Come, let us sing together that little ditty—

***“I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me;
And on the Cross He shed His blood
From sin to set me free.”***

This will be a blessed morning for you if you can not only sing it, but carry it out at once by a simple faith in our living, risen, reigning Savior. God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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STRENGTHENING MEDICINE FOR GOD'S SERVANTS NO. 1214

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

***"I will not fail you, nor forsake you."
Joshua 1:5.***

NO doubt God had spoken to Joshua before. He had been a man of faith for many years and his faith enabled him to distinguish himself by such simple truthfulness of character and thoroughly faithful obedience to the Lord's will, that he and another were the only two left of the whole generation that came up out of Egypt. "Faithful among the faithless found," he survived where all else died. Standing erect in full vigor, he might have been compared to a lone tree which spreads its verdant branches untouched by the axe which has leveled its fellows with the ground.

But now Joshua was about to enter upon a new work—he had become king in Jeshurun instead of Moses! From a servant, he had risen to be a ruler, and it now fell to his lot to lead the people across the Jordan and marshal their forces for the conquest of the Promised Land. On the threshold of this high enterprise the Lord appears to His servant and says, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you: I will not fail you, nor forsake you." When God's people come into fresh positions, they shall have fresh revelations of His love! New dangers will bring new protections. New difficulties, new helps. New discouragements, new comforts, so that we may rejoice in tribulations, also, because they are so many newly-opened doors of God's mercy to us!

We will be glad of our extremities because they are Divine opportunities. What the Lord said to Joshua was particularly encouraging and it came precisely when he needed it. Great was his peril and great was the promise—"Be not afraid, neither be you dismayed: for the Lord your God is with you where ever you go." We will waste no time in preface, but at once consider the Divine promise. "I will not fail you, nor forsake you."

I. Observe here, first, THE SUITABILITY OF THE CONSOLATION WHICH THESE WORDS GAVE TO JOSHUA. "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." This must have been very cheering to him *in reference to himself*. He knew Moses and he must have had a very high esteem of him. He was a great man, one of a thousand—scarcely among all that have been

born of woman has there arisen a greater than Moses. Joshua had been his servant and, no doubt, considered himself to be very inferior to that great Lawgiver.

A sense of his own weakness comes over a man all the more from being associated with a grander mind. If you mingle with your inferiors you are apt to grow vain—but closely associated with superior minds there is a far greater probability that you will become depressed and may think even less of yourself than humility might require—for humility is, after all, only a right estimate of our own powers. Joshua, therefore, may possibly have been somewhat despondent under a very pressing sense of his own deficiencies, and this cheering assurance would meet his case—“I will not fail you: though you are less wise, or meek, or courageous than Moses, *I* will not fail you, nor forsake you.”

If God is with our weakness it waxes strong. If He is with our folly it rises into wisdom. If He is with our timidity it gathers courage. It matters not how conscious a man may be of being nothing at all in himself, when he is conscious of the Divine Presence he even rejoices in his infirmity because the power of God rests upon him. If the Lord says unto the weakest man or woman here, “I will not fail you, nor forsake you,” no cowardly thought will cross that ennobled spirit! That word will nerve the trembler with a lion-like courage which no adversary will be able to daunt.

The consolation given to Joshua would be exceedingly suitable *in the presence of his enemies*. He had spied out the land and he knew it to be inhabited by giant races, men famous both for stature and strength. The sons of Anak were there and, other tribes, described as “great, and many, and tall.” He knew that they were a warlike people and expert in the use of destructive implements of war, such as brought terror upon men, for they had chariots of iron. He knew, too, that their cities were of colossal dimensions—fortresses whose stones at this very day surprise the traveler, so that he asks what wondrous skill could have lifted those masses of rock into their places.

The other spies had said that these Canaanites dwelt in cities that were walled up to Heaven and, though Joshua did not endorse that exaggeration, he was very well aware that the cities to be captured were fortresses of great strength. And he knew the people to be exterminated were men of ferocious courage and great physical energy. Therefore the Lord said, “I will not fail you, nor forsake you.” What more was needed? Surely, in the Presence of God, Anakim become dwarfs, strongholds become as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers and chariots of iron are as thistle-down upon the hillside driven before the blast!

What is strong against the Most High? What is formidable in opposition to Jehovah? “If God is for us, who can be against us?” They that are with

us are more than they that are against us, when once the Lord of Hosts is seen in our ranks! "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Though a host should encamp against us, our hearts shall not fear! Though war should rise against us, in this will we be confident. This consolation, too, was *sufficient for all supplies*. Perhaps Joshua knew that the manna was no longer to fall. In the wilderness the supply of heavenly bread was continuous, but when they crossed the Jordan they must quarter on the enemy.

And with the myriads of people that were under Joshua's command, the matter of providing for them must have been no trifle. According to some computations nearly three million people came up out of Egypt—I scarcely credit the computation and am inclined to believe that the whole matter of the numbers of the Old Testament is not yet understood. I believe a better knowledge of the Hebrew tongue will lead to the discovery that the figures have been frequently misunderstood. But, still, a very large number of people came with Joshua to the edge of the wilderness and crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan.

Who was to provide for all these hungry bands? Joshua might have said, "Shall all the flocks and the herds be slain for this great multitude? And will the sea yield up her fish when the manna ceases? How shall these people be fed?" "I will not fail you, nor forsake you" was an answer which would meet all the demands of the commissariat! They might eat to the full, for God would find them food! Their clothes might wax old upon them, now that the miracle of the wilderness would cease, but new garments would be found for them in the wardrobes of their enemies. When the Lord opens all His granaries, none shall lack for bread. And when He unlocks His wardrobes, none shall go bare! So there was no room for anxiety in Joshua's mind. As for himself, if weak, this made him strong! As for his enemies, if they were powerful, this promise made him stronger than they! And as for the needs of Israel, if they were great, this promise supplied them all!

Surely this word must often have brought charming consolation to the heart of the son of Nun *when he saw the people failing him*. There was only the venerable Caleb left, of all his comrades with whom he had shared the 40 years' march through the great and terrible wilderness. Caleb and he were the last two sheaves of the great harvest—and they were both like shocks of corn fully ripe for the garner. Old men grow lonely and small wonder is it if they do. I have heard them say that they live in a world where they are not known, now that, one by one, all their old friends are gone Home and they are left alone—like the last swallow of autumn when all its fellows have sought a sunnier climate. Yet the Lord

says, "I will not forsake you: I shall not die: I am ever with you. Your Friend in Heaven will live on as long as you do."

As for the generation which had sprung up around Joshua, they were very little better than their fathers. They turned back in the day of battle, even the children of Ephraim, when they were armed and carried bows. They were very apt to go aside into the most provoking sin. Joshua had as hard a task with them as Moses had—and it was enough to break the heart of Moses to have to deal with them. The Lord seems to bid him put no confidence in them, neither to be discomfited if they should be false and treacherous—"I will not fail you: *they* may, but *I* will not. I will not forsake you. They may prove cowards and traitors, but I will not desert you."

Oh, what an evil thing it is in a false and fickle world, where he that eats bread with us lifts up his heel against us! Where the favorite counselor becomes an Ahithophel and turns his wisdom into crafty hate! But we know that "there is a Friend that sticks closer than a brother," One who is faithful and gives us sure tokens of a love which many waters cannot quench! I might dwell upon this point and show that the consolatory promise has as many facets as a well-cut diamond, each one reflecting the light of Divine consolation upon the eye of Joshua's faith—but we will come to other matters.

II. Secondly, AT WHAT TIMES MAY WE CONSIDER THIS PROMISE TO BE SPOKEN TO OURSELVES? It is all very well to listen to it, as spoken to Joshua, but, O God, if You would speak thus to *us*, how consoled would we be! Do You ever do so? May *we* be so bold as to believe that You thus comfort *us*? Beloved, the whole run of Scripture speaks to the same effect to men of like mind with Joshua. No Scripture is of *private* interpretation! No text has spout itself upon the person who first received it. God's comforts are like wells which no one man or set of men can drain dry, however mighty may be their thirst!

A well may be opened for Hagar, but that well is never closed, and any other wanderer may drink at it. The fountain of our text first gushed forth to refresh Joshua, but if we are in Joshua's position and are of his character, we may bring our water pots and fill them to the brim! Let me mention *when* I think we may safely feel that God says to us, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." Surely it is when we are *called to do God's work*. Joshua's work was the Lord's work. It was God who had given the country to the people and who had said, "I will drive out the Canaanite from before you," and Joshua was God's executioner—the sword in the hand of the Lord for the driving out of the condemned races.

He was not entering upon a quixotic engagement of his own choosing and devising. He had not elected himself and selected his own work, but

God had called him to it, put him in the office and bid him do it! And therefore He said to him, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." Brother, are you serving God? Do you live to win souls? Is it your grand object to be the instrument in God's hand of accomplishing His purposes of Grace to the fallen sons of men? Do you know that God has put you where you are and called you to do the work to which your life is dedicated? Then go on in God's name, for, as surely as He called you to His work, you may be sure that to you, also, He says, as indeed to all His servants, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you."

But I hear some of you say, "We are not engaged in work of such a kind that we could precisely call it 'work for God.'" Well, Brothers and Sisters, but are you *engaged in a work which you endeavor to perform to God's Glory*? Is your ordinary and common trade one which is lawful—one concerning which you have no doubt as to its honest propriety—and in carrying it on do you follow only right principles? Do you endeavor to glorify God in the shop? Do you make the bells on the horses holiness to the Lord? It would not be possible for all of us men to be preachers, for where would be the hearers? Many would be very much out of place if he were to leave his ordinary calling and devote himself to what is so unscripturally called "the ministry." The fact is, the truest religious life is that in which a man follows the ordinary calling of life in the spirit of a Christian.

Now, are you doing so? If so, you are as much ministering before God in measuring out yards of calico, or weighing pounds of tea, as Joshua was in slaying Hivites, Jebusites and Hittites! You are as much serving God in looking after your own children and training them up in God's fear, and minding the house and making your household a Church for God, as you would be if you had been called to lead an army to battle for the Lord of Hosts! And you may take this promise for yourself, for the path of duty is the path where this promise is to be enjoyed. "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." Now, mark you, if you are living for *yourself*—if you are living for *gain*—if selfishness is the object of life, or if you are pursuing an unhallowed calling. If there is anything about your mode of business which is contrary to the mind and will of God and sound doctrine, you cannot expect God to aid you in sin, nor will He do it.

Neither can you ask Him to pander to your lusts, and to assist you in the gratification of your own selfishness. But if you can truly say, "I live to the Glory of God and the ordinary life that I lead I desire to consecrate entirely to His Glory," then you may take this promise home to yourself, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." But, mark you, there is another matter. We must, if we are to have this promise, *take God into our calculations*. A great many persons go about their supposed lifework without even *thinking* about God. I have heard of one who said everybody had left him, and

someone said, "But surely, as a Christian, God has not failed you?" "Oh," he said, "I forgot God."

I am afraid there are many who call themselves Christians and yet forget God in common life. Among all the forces that a man calculates upon when he engages in an enterprise, he should never omit the chief force—but often it is so with us. We enquire, "Am I competent for such a work? I ought to undertake it, but am I competent?" And straightway there is a calculation made of *competency*. And in these calculations there is no item put down, "Item: The promise of a living God. Item: The guidance of the Spirit."

These are left out of the calculation! Remember that if you willfully omit them, you cannot expect to enjoy them! You must walk by *faith* if you are to enjoy the privileges of the faithful. "The just shall live by faith," and if you begin to live by *sense*, you shall join the weeping and the wailing of those who have gone to broken cisterns and have found them empty. And your lips shall be parched with thirst because you have forgotten the Fountain of living waters to which you should have gone. Do you, Brothers and Sisters, habitually take God into your calculations? Do you calculate upon Omniscient direction and Omnipotent aid?

I have heard of a certain captain who had led his troops into a very difficult position and he knew that on the morrow he should need them all to be full of courage. And so, disguising himself, at nightfall he went round their tents and listened to their conversations until he heard one of them say, "Our captain is a very great warrior and has won many victories. But he has this time made a mistake. For look, there are so many thousands of the enemy and he has only so many infantry, so many cavalry, and so many guns." The soldier made out the account and was about to sum up the scanty total when the captain, unable to bear it any longer, threw aside the curtain of the tent and said, "And how many do you count *me* for, Sir?"—as much as to say, "I have won so many battles that you ought to know that my skill can multiply battalions by handling them."

And so the Lord hears His servants estimating how feeble they are, and how little they can do, and how few are their helpers—and I think I hear Him rebukingly say, "But how many do you count your God for? Is He never to come into your estimate? You talk of providing and forget the God of Providence! You talk of working, but forget the God who works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure." How often in our enterprises have prudent people plucked us by the sleeve and said we have gone too far? Could we reckon upon being able to carry out what we had undertaken? No, we could *not* reckon upon it, except that we believe in God—and with God all things are possible! If it is *His* work, we may venture far

beyond the shallowness of prudence into the great deeps of Divine confidence, for God, who warrants our faith, will honor it before long!

O, Christian, if you can venture and feel it to be no venture, then may you grasp the promise, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you"! When you are on your *own* feet you may dash against a stone! When you are running in your *own* strength you may faint! But, "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. And they shall walk and not faint." Now, remember, that we may take this promise when we are engaged in God's work, or when we turn our ordinary business *into* God's work and when we do really, by faith, take God into our calculations!

But *we must also be careful that we walk in God's ways*. Observe that the next verse to the text runs thus, "Be strong, and of a good courage," and then the 7th verse is a singular one, "Only be you strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the Law which Moses, My servant commanded you: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper where ever you go." "Be strong and very courageous." What for? To obey! Does it need courage and strength to *obey*? Why, nowadays, that man is thought to be courageous who will have *no* Laws of God to bind him! And he is thought to be strong-minded who ridicules Revelation! But let us rest assured that he is truly strong of mind and heart who is content to be thought a fool and sticks to the good old Truths of God and keeps the good old way.

There are enough, nowadays, of "intellectual" preachers. Some of us may be excused from this vaunted intellectualism that we may preach the simple Gospel. There are enough who can becloud theology with the chill fogs of "modern thought." We are satisfied to let the Word speak for itself without misting it with our thinking. I believe it needs more courage and strength of mind to keep to the old things than to follow after novel and airy speculations. We must not expect the God of Truth to be with us if we go away from God and His Truth. Be careful how you dive. To watch every putting down of your foot is a good thing. Be exact and precise as to the Divine Rule—careless about man's opinion and even defying it in which it is error. But be dutiful to God's Law, bowing before it, yielding your whole nature in cheerful subservience to every command of the Most High. He that walks uprightly, walks surely—and to him is the promise, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you."

Begin your life-course with a policy of your own and you may get through it how you can. Be wise in your own conceit and trust to your own judgment—and the promotion of fools will be your reward! But be simple enough to do only God's will—to leave consequences and to follow the Truth of God—and integrity and uprightness will preserve you. Go on

doing right at all costs and the right will repay you all it costs you—and the righteous Lord will be true to His Word—“I will not fail you, nor forsake you.” These, then, I think, are the conditions under which any believing man or woman may take to themselves the words of our text.

III. But now, thirdly, let us consider WHAT THIS PROMISE DOES NOT PRECLUDE. “I will not fail you, nor forsake you.” We must not misunderstand this gracious Word, lest we be disappointed when things happen contrary to our expectations. *This promise does not exclude effort.* A great many mistakes are made about the promises of God. Some think that if God is to be with them they will have nothing to do. Joshua did not find it so. He and his troops had to slay every Amorite, Hittite and Hivite that fell in battle. He had to fight and use his sword just as much as if there had been no God at all!

The best and the wisest thing in the world is to work as if it all depended upon *you*—and then trust in God, knowing that it all depends upon Him! He will not fail us, but we are not, therefore, to fold our arms and sit still. He will not forsake us, but we are not, therefore, to go upstairs to bed and expect that our daily bread will drop into our mouths. I have known idle people who have said, “Jehovah-Jireh,” and sat with their feet on their desks and their arms folded, and have been lazy and self-indulgent. And generally their presumption has ended in this—God has provided them rags and jags, and a place in the county jail before long! I think these are the very best provisions that can be made for idle people, and the sooner they get it the better for society!

Oh no, no, no, no! God does not pander to our laziness! And any man who expects to get on in this world with anything that is good, without work, is a fool! Throw your whole soul into the service of God and then you will get God's blessing if you are resting upon Him. Even Mohammad could appreciate this! When one of his followers said, “I will turn my camel loose and trust in Providence,” Mohammed said, “No, no! Tie him up as tightly as you can and then trust in Providence.” Oliver Cromwell had a commonsense view of this Truth of God, too. “Trust in God,” he said, as they went to battle, “but keep your powder dry.”

And so must we. I do not believe that God would have His servants act like fools! The best judgment a man has should be employed in the service of God. Common sense is, perhaps, as rare a thing among Christian people as salmon in the Thames. The devil's servants have more wisdom in their generation than the children of Light have, but it ought not to be. If you want to succeed, use every faulty you have, and put forth all your strength—and if it is a right cause you may then fall back on the promise—“I will not fail you, nor forsake you.” *Neither does this promise preclude occasional disaster.* After Joshua had received this promise he went

up to Ai and suffered a terrible defeat because the regulations of the war had been violated.

They had defrauded the Lord of a part of the spoil of Jericho, which was hidden in Achan's tent, and this troubled Israel. Yes, and without the violation of any law, the best man in the world must expect, in the most successful enterprise, that there will be some discouragements. Look at the sea—it is rolling in, it will rise to full tide before long—but every wave that comes up dies upon the shore! And after two or three great waves which seem to capture the pebbles, there comes a feebler one which sucks back. Very well, but the sea will win and reach its fullness. So in every good work for God, there is a drawing back, every now and then. In fact, God often makes His servants go back that they may have all the more room to run and take a bigger leap than they could have taken from the place where they stood before.

Defeats in the hand of faith are only preparations for victory. If we are beaten for a little while, we grind our swords sharper and the next time we take more care that our enemies shall know how keen they are. Do not, therefore, let any temporary disappointments dismay you—they are incidental to humanity and necessary parts of our education. Go on. God will certainly test you, but He will not fail you, nor forsake you. *Nor, again, does this promise preclude frequent tribulations and testing of faith.* In the autobiography of the famous Franck of Halle, who built and, in the hands of God, provided for, the orphan house of Halle, he says, "I thought when I committed myself and my work to God by faith, that I had only to pray when I had need, and that the supplies would come. But I found that I had sometimes to wait and pray for a long time."

The supplies did come, but not at once. The pinch never went so far as absolute want—but there were intervals of severe pressure. There was nothing to spare. Every spoonful of meal had to be scraped from the bottom of the barrel and every drop of oil that oozed out seemed as if it might be the last—but still it never did come to the last drop—and there was always just a little meal left. Bread shall be given us, but not always in 4-pound loaves. Our water shall be sure, but not always a brook full—it may only come in small cups. God has not promised to take any of you to Heaven without trying your faith! He will not fail you, but He will bring you very low. He will not forsake you, but He will test you and prove you. You will frequently need all your faith to keep your spirits up—and unless God enables you to trust without staggering—you will find yourself sorely disquieted at times.

Now, are any of you brought to the verge of famine in God's work? It is a state in which I have often been—thank God, very often—and I have always been delivered and, therefore, I can, from experience, say the Lord is

to be trusted and He will not allow the faithful to be confused. He has said it and He will perform it—"I will not fail you, nor forsake you." Dear Friends, I would like to say, once more, about this, that *this promise does not preclude our suffering very greatly*, or our dying and, perhaps, dying a very sad and terrible death as men judge. God never left Paul, but I have seen the spot where Paul's head was chopped off by the executioner.

The Lord never left Peter, but Peter, like his Master, had to die by crucifixion. The Lord never left the martyrs, but they had to ride to Heaven in chariots of fire. The Lord has never left His Church, but oftentimes His Church has been trampled as straw is trodden for the dunghill. Her blood has been scattered over the whole earth and she has seemed to be utterly destroyed. Still, you know, the story of the Church is only another illustration of my text—God has not failed her, nor forsaken her! In the deaths of her saints we read not defeat, but victory! As they passed away one by one, stars ceasing to shine below, they shone with tenfold brilliance in the upper sky because of the clouds through which they passed before they reached their celestial spheres.

Beloved, we may have to groan in a Gethsemane, but God will not fail us! We may have to die on a Golgotha, but He will not forsake us. We shall rise again and, as our Master was triumphant through death, even so shall *we* through the greatest suffering and the most terrible defeats rise to His Throne!

IV. I must pass on again, and occupy you for a few moments over a fourth point, which is this. WHAT, THEN, DOES THE TEXT MEAN, IF WE MAY HAVE ALL THIS TRIAL HAPPENING TO US? It means to those to whom it belongs, first, *no failure for your work*. Secondly, *no desertion for yourself*. "I will not fail you." *Your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord*. What is it? Is it the great work of preaching the Gospel to thousands? God will not fail you in that. I remember how, 20 years ago, I was preaching the Gospel in the simplicity of my heart and some little stir was made. But the wise men of the day made light of it and said it was all to end in six months' time.

We went on, did we not? And by-and-by, when we had still greater crowds listening to us, it was "a temporary excitement, a sort of religious spasm." It would all end like a mere flash in the pan, they said. I wonder where those prophets are now? If there are any of them here, I hope they feel comfortable in the unfulfilled prophecy which they can now study with some degree of satisfaction. Thousands on earth and hundreds in Heaven can tell what God has worked! Is it another kind of work, dear Brother, that you are engaged in? A very quiet, unobtrusive, unobserved effort? Well, I should not wonder that, little as it is, somebody or other sneers at it.

There is scarcely a David in the world without an Eliab to sneer at him. Press on, Brother! Stick to it, plod away, work hard, trust in your God and your work will not fail. We have heard of a minister who added only one to his Church through a long year of very earnest ministry—only one! A sad thing for him—but that one happened to be Robert Moffat—and he was worth a thousand of most of us! Go on! If you bring but *one* to Christ, who shall estimate the value of the one? Your class is very small just now. God does not seem to be working. Pray about it, get more scholars into the class, and teach better, and even if you should not see immediate success, do not believe that it is all a failure. Never was a true Gospel sermon preached, yet, with faith and prayer, that was a failure!

Since the day when Christ, our Master, first preached the Gospel, unto this day—I dare to say it—there was never a true prayer that failed, nor a true declaration of the Gospel made in a right spirit that fell to the ground without prospering according to the pleasure of the Lord. Fire away, Brother! Every shot lands somewhere, for in heavenly as well as earthly warfare, “every bullet has its billet.” And then there shall be *no desertion as to yourself*, for your heavenly Friend has said, “I will not *forsake you*.” You will not be left alone or without a helper. You are thinking of what you will do in old age. Do not think of that—think of what *God* will do for you in old age! O, but your great need and long illness will wear out your friends, you say. Perhaps you may wear out your friends, but you will not wear out your *God*—and He can raise up new helpers if the old ones fail.

O, but your infirmities are many and will soon crush you down! You cannot live long in such circumstances. Very well, then, you will be in Heaven and that is far better. But you dread pining sickness. It may never come. But, suppose it should come, remember what will come with it—“I will make all your bed in your sickness.” “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” So runs the promise. “Fear you not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God.” “The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but the Covenant of My love shall not depart from you, says the Lord, that has mercy on you.” You shall not be alone! You shall not wring your hands in despair and say, “I am utterly wretched, like the pelican of the wilderness—utterly forsaken like the owl of the desert.” The mighty God of Jacob forsakes not His own.

V. And so this brings me to the last point, which is this—WHY MAY WE BE QUITE SURE THAT THIS PROMISE WILL BE FULFILLED? I answer, first, we may be quite sure because *it is God's promise*. Did ever any promise of God fall to the ground? There are those in the world who are challenging us continually and saying, “Where is your God?” They deny the efficacy of prayer. They deny the interpositions of Providence. Well, I do not wonder that they do. The bulk of Christians do not realize, either,

the answer to prayer or the interposition of Providence—for this reason—that they do not live in the light of God's countenance, or live by faith.

But the man who walks by faith will tell you that he notices Providence and never is deficient of a Providence to notice—that he notices answers to his prayer—and never is without an answer to his prayer. What is a wonder to others becomes a common fact of everyday life to the believer in Christ! Where God has given His Word, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you," let us believe it, for—

***"His very Word of Grace is strong
As that which built the skies;
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises."***

Rest well assured that if a man is called to do God's work, God will not fail him because *it is not after the manner of the Lord to desert His servants*. David, in the dark days of his sin bade Joab place Uriah, the Hittite, in the forefront of the battle and leave him there to die by the hand of the children of Ammon. Was it not cruel? It was base and treacherous to the last degree!

Can you suspect the Lord of anything so unworthy? God forbid! My soul has known what it is to plead with the Lord my God after this fashion—"Lord, You have placed me in a difficult position and given me service to perform far beyond my capacity. I never coveted this prominent place and if You do not help me, now, why have You placed me in it?" I have always found such argument to be prevalent with God. He will not push His servants into severe conflicts and then fail them! Besides, remember that *should God's servants fail*, if they are really God's servants, *the enemy would exult and boast against the Lord Himself*.

This was a great point with Joshua in later days. He said, "The Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what will You do unto Your great name?" If the Lord raises up Luther and does not help Luther, then it is not Luther that fails—it is God that fails in the estimation of the world. If the Lord sends a man to bear witness to a Truth and that man's testimony utterly breaks down, then in the estimation of men it is the *Truth* that breaks down, and consequently dishonor is cast upon God and His Truth—and He will not have it so. If He uses the weakest instrumentality, He will laugh to scorn His adversaries by it and they shall never say that the Lord was overcome.

Besides, if God has raised you up, my Brother or Sister, to accomplish a purpose by you, *do you think He will be defeated?* Were ever any of His designs frustrated? I have heard preachers talk about God being defeated by the free will of man and disappointed by man's depravity and I know

not what else! But such a god is no god of mine! My God is One who has His will and will have it—who, when He designs a thing, accomplishes it! He is a God whose Omnipotence none can resist, concerning whom it may be said, “Who shall stay His hand, or say unto Him, What are you doing?” The mighty God of Jacob puts His hand to a design and carries it through as surely as He begins! The weakness of the instrument in His hand does not hinder Him, nor the opposition of His enemies deter Him! Only believe in Him and, weak as you are, you shall perform wonders—and in your feebleness the strength of God shall be glorified!

Besides, my Brothers and Sisters, if we trust God and live for God, *He loves us much too well to leave us*. It is not as though we were aliens, and strangers, and foreigners—mercenary troops whom the prince who hires them leaves to be cut in pieces! No, we are His own dear *children*! God sees Himself in all His servants. He sees in them the members of the body of His dear Son. The very least among them is as dear to Him as the apple of His eye and beloved as His own soul. It is not to be imagined that He will ever put a load upon His own children's shoulders without giving them strength to bear the burden, or send them to labors for which He will not give them adequate resources! O, rest in the Lord, you faithful. “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him,” for He will appear unto your rescue. Has He not said, “I will not fail you, nor forsake you”?

As I have thus been bringing forth marrow and fatness from the Word, I have been thinking of some of you, poor souls, who cannot eat thereof and have no share in it. I am glad to see you here, especially on Thursday night, for it is not every unconverted person that will come to these week-night services. You must have a hungering after these good things, or you would not be here in such numbers. I hope your mouths are watering after the good things of the Covenant. I hope, as you see the promises of God on the table and see how rich they are, you will say to yourself, “Would God I had a share in them!”

Well, poor Soul, if God gives you an appetite, I can only say the food is free! If you would have God to be your Helper—if you would, indeed, be saved by Christ—come and welcome, for you are the soul that He desires to bless! If you have half a wish towards God, He has a *longing* towards you! If you desire Him, you have not a step up on Him—depend upon it, He has long before desired you! Come to Him! Rest in Him! Accept the Atonement which His Son has presented. Begin the life of faith in real earnest and you shall find that what I have said is all true—only it falls short of the *full* truth, for you will say, like the Queen of Sheba when she had seen Solomon's glory—“The half has not been told me.”

Blessed be the Lord forever, who has taught my poor heart to believe in Himself and to live upon unseen realities, and rest in a faithful God! There

is no peace or joy like it, or worthy to be mentioned in the same day. God grant it to each one of you, Beloved, for His name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 63.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—34 (VERSE 1), 742, 745.

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JOSHUA'S OBEDIENCE

NO. 796

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

***“Only be you strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the Law which Moses, My servant commanded you: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper where ever you go.”
Joshua 1:7.***

JOSHUA was very highly favored in the matter of promises. The promises given him by God were broadly comprehensive and exceedingly encouraging. But Joshua was not, therefore, to say within himself, “These covenant engagements will surely be fulfilled and I may therefore sit still and do nothing.” On the contrary, because God had decreed that the land should be conquered, Joshua was to be diligent to lead the people onward to battle. He was not to use the promise as a couch upon which his indolence might luxuriate, but as a girdle wherewith to gird up his loins for future activity.

As a spur to energy let us always regard the gracious promises of our God. We should sin against Him most ungratefully and detestably were we to say within ourselves, “God will not desert His people, therefore let us venture into sin.” And we are almost equally wicked if we whisper in our minds, “God will assuredly fulfill His own decrees and give the souls of His redeemed as a reward to His Son Jesus—therefore let us do nothing and refrain altogether from zealous Christian service.” This is not proper language for true children. This is the talk of the indolently ignorant or of mere pretenders who do but mock God while they pretend to reverence His decrees.

By the oath, by the promise, by the Covenant and by the blood which seals it, we are exhorted continually to be at work for Christ, since we are saved in order that we may serve Him in the power of the Holy Spirit, with heart, and soul and strength. Joshua was especially exhorted to continue in the path of obedience. He was the captain, but there was a great Commander-in-Chief who gave him his marching orders. Joshua was not left to his own fallible judgment, or fickle fancy—he was to do according to all that was written in the Book of the Law. So is it with us who are Believers. We are not under the Law, but under Grace—yet there is still a Gospel rule which we are bound to follow, and the Law in the hand of Christ is a delightful rule of life to the Believer.

We are not to follow, in the service of God, our own fancies. We are not allowed to frame regulations according to our own conceptions, but our direction is, “whatever HE says unto you, do it.” His servants shall serve Him. His sheep follow His footsteps. His disciples obey their Lord. His soldiers fulfill His pleasure: “By their fruits you shall know them.” If we are not obedient unto Christ we may rest assured that we have not the spirit of Christ, and are none of His.

I. In speaking upon the obedience which was enjoined upon Joshua. I would remind you that OBEDIENCE IS THE HIGHEST PRACTICAL COURAGE. Read the text, "Only be you strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the Law which Moses, My servant commanded you." You supposed when you heard the words, "Only be you strong and very courageous," that some great exploit was to be performed, and the supposition was correct, for all exploits are comprehended in that one declaration, "That you may observe to do according to all the Law which Moses, My servant commanded you."

The highest exploit of the Christian life is to obey Christ. This is such an exploit, my Brethren, as shall never be performed by any man unless he has learned the rule of faith, has been led to rest upon Christ and to advance upon the path of obedience in a strength which is not his own, but which he has received from the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The world counts obedience to be a mean-spirited thing, and speaks of rebellion as freedom. We have heard men say, "I will be my own master. I shall follow my own will." To be a free thinker and a free liver seems to be the worldling's glory, and yet if the world could but have sense enough to convict itself of folly, upon indisputable proof being afforded it, it were not difficult to prove that a reviler of the obedient is a fool.

Take the world's own martial rule. Who is accounted to be the boldest and the best soldier but the man who is most thoroughly obedient to the captain's command? There is a story told of the old French wars which has been repeated hundreds of times. A sentinel is set to keep a certain position and at nightfall, as he is pacing to and fro, the emperor himself comes by. He does not know the password. Straightway the soldier stops him. "You cannot pass," he says. "But I must pass," says the emperor. "No," replies the man, "if you were the little corporal in gray himself you should not go by," by which, of course, he meant the emperor! Thus the autocrat, himself, was held in check by order. The vigilant soldier was afterwards handsomely rewarded and all the world said that he was a brave fellow.

Now, from that instance, and there are hundreds of such which are always told with approbation, we learn that obedience to superior commands, carried out at all hazards, is one of the highest proofs of courage that a man can possibly give. To this, the world, itself, gives its assent. Then surely it is not a mean and sneaking thing for a man to be obedient to Him who is the Commander-in-Chief of the universe, the King of kings, and Lord of lords! He who would do the right and the true thing in cold blood, in the teeth of ridicule, is a bolder man than he who flings himself before the cannon's mouth for fame! Yes, and let me add, to persist in scrupulous obedience throughout life may need more courage than even the martyr evinces when once and for all he gives himself to burn at the stake!

In Joshua's case full obedience to the Divine command involved innumerable difficulties. The command to him was that he should conquer the whole of the land for the favored tribes, and to the best of his ability he did it. But he had to besiege cities which were walled up to the heavens, and to fight with monarchs whose warriors came to battle in chariots of

iron armed with scythes! The first conflicts were something terrible. If he had not been a bold and able soldier, he would have put up his sword and desisted from the strife. But the spirit of *obedience* sustained him. Though you and I have no Hivites and Jebusites to kill, no cities to pull down, no chariots of iron to encounter, yet we shall find it no easy thing to keep to the path of Christian consistency. Count well the cost, you who have just enlisted under my Lord's banner—you shall not find it to be child's play to "follow the Lamb where ever He goes."

To put on the pilgrim's dress of white linen and then carelessly to bespatter it with unholiness, and soon to profess repentance, only to fall again, and bemire it in the dirt, and then time after time to wash it, or *say* you have washed it—this is easy enough. Fits and starts of godliness many have who end their lives in despair. The Christianity of some people costs them little cross-bearing, much less any "resisting unto blood, striving against sin." A merely nominal profession is easy enough to make and to maintain after the manner of the times. But to be a Christian, indeed, through and through—to eat, and drink, and sleep eternal life, to live the life of God on earth—this is the work, this is the difficulty! You will need to have the strength of Samson, and something more, to pluck up the gates which block up your onward road—a Divine strength must be yours if you are to keep the crown of the causeway against all comers.

Moreover, Joshua had not only difficulties to meet with, but he made a great many enemies through his obedience. This was naturally so. As soon as it was known that Jericho had been taken, that Ai had been carried by assault, we read of first one confederation of kings, and then of another—their object being to destroy the power of Joshua, since these kings well knew that he would crush *them* if they did not crush him. Now the Christian man is in a like plight. He will be sure to make enemies. It will be one of his objects to make *none*, but, on the other hand, if to do the right, and to believe the true, and to carry out the honest should make him lose every earthly friend, he will count it but a small loss, since his great Friend in Heaven will be yet more friendly and reveal Himself to him more graciously than ever.

O you who have taken up His Cross, don't you know what your Master said? "I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Christ is the great Peacemaker, but before peace He brings war. Where the light comes, the darkness must retire. Where truth is, the lie must flee, or, if it abides, there must be a stern conflict, for the truth *cannot*, and *will no*, lower its standard, and the lie must be trod under foot. If you follow Christ, you shall have all the dogs of the world yelping at your heels! If you mince matters, and hold with the hare and run with the hounds, you may be a Christian and a worldling, too, after a sort. But if you would live so as to stand the test of the last tribunal, depend upon it—the world will not speak well of you.

He who has the friendship of the world will find that he is an enemy to God. But if you are true and faithful to the Most High, men will resent your unflinching fidelity since it is a testimony against *their* iniquities.

Fearless of all consequences, you must do the right! You will need the courage of a lion unhesitatingly to pursue a course which shall turn your best friend into your fiercest foe, but for the love of Jesus you must do it! For the truth's sake to hazard reputation and affection is such a deed that to do it *constantly* you will need a degree of moral principle which only the Spirit of God can work in you. Yet turn not your back like a coward, but play the man!

And again, Joshua, in his obedience, needed much courage because he had undertaken a task which involved, if he carried it out, long *years* of perseverance. After he had captured one city, he must go on to attack the next fortress. The days were not long enough for his battles. He bids the sun stand still and the moon is stayed—and even when that long day has passed, yet the morning sees him sword in hand still. Joshua was like one of those old knights who slept in their armor. He was always fighting. His sword must have been well hacked, and often must his armor have been blood red. He had before him a lifelong enterprise! Such is the life of the Christian—a warfare from beginning to end. As soon as you are washed in Christ's blood and clothed in His righteousness, you must begin to hew your way through a lane of enemies right up to the eternal throne!

Every foot of the way will be disputed. Not an inch will Satan yield to you. You must continue daily to fight. "He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved." Not the beginner who commences in his own strength, and soon comes to an end, but he who, girt about with Divine Grace—with the Spirit of God within him—determines to hold on till he has smitten the last foe, and never leaves the battlefield till he has heard the word, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" Let the man who says that the Christian's life is mean and devoid of manliness, let him go and learn wisdom before he speaks, for of all men the persevering Believer is the most manly. You who boast of yourself, of your courage in sinning, you yield to the foe. You are a cringing cur! You turn tail upon the enemy—you court the friendship of the world—you have not courage enough to dare to do the right and the true! You have passed under the yoke of Satan and your own passions—and to conceal your own cowardice—you are base enough to call the brave Christian a coward. Away with you for adding lying to your other vices!

Oftentimes, if we follow Christ, we shall need to be brave, indeed, in facing the world's customs. You will find it so, young man, in a mercantile house. You will find it so, husband, even in connection with your own wife and children if they are unsaved. Children have found this so in school. Traders find it so in the marketplace. He that would be a true Christian had need wear a stout heart. There is a story told of Dr. Adam Clarke which shows the courage which the youthful Christian sometimes needs. When he was in a shop in the town of Colerain, they were preparing for the annual fair and some rolls of cloth were being measured. One of them was too short, and the master said, "Come, Adam, you take that end, and I will take the other, and we will soon pull it, and stretch it till it is long enough."

But Adam had no hands to do it with, and no ears to hear his master's dishonest order—and at last he flatly refused, whereupon the master said,

"You will never make a tradesman. You are good for nothing here. You had better go home, and take to something else." Now that thing may not be done now, for men do not generally cheat in that open downright kind of way nowadays, but they cheat after more roguish fashions. The records of the bankruptcy court will tell you what I mean. Bankruptcies, one after another of the same person, are doubled-distilled thieving, generally—not old-fashioned thieving like that which once brought men to prison and to the gallows—but something worse than highway robbery and burglary!

The genuine Christian will, every now and then, have to put his foot down and say, "No, I cannot, and I will not be mixed up with such a thing as that." And he will have to say this to his master, to his father, to his friend whose respect he desires to gain, and who may be of the greatest possible assistance to him in life. But if it is your duty, my dear Brother and Sister, thus to do the right, do it if the skies fall! Do it if poverty should stare you in the face! Do it if you should be turned into the streets tomorrow! You shall never be a loser by God in the long run, and if you have to suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are you! Count yourselves to be happy that you have the privilege of making any sacrifice for the sake of conscience, for in these days we have not the power to honor God as they did who went to prison, and to the rack, and to the stake.

Let us not, therefore, cast aside other opportunities which are given to us of showing how much we love the Lord, and how faithfully we desire to serve Him. Be very courageous to do what the Lord Jesus bids you in all things, and let men judge you to be an idiot if they will—you shall be one of the Lord's champions, a true Knight of the Cross.

II. Secondly, I learn from the text that THE EXACTNESS OF OBEDIENCE IS THE ESSENCE OF OBEDIENCE. "That you may observe to do according to all the Law which Moses, My servant commanded you: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left." The world says, "We must not be too precise." Hypocritical world! The world means that it would be glad to get rid of God's Law altogether! But as it scarcely dares to say that point-blank, it cants with the most sickening of all cant, "We must not be too particular, or too nice." As one said to an old Puritan once, "Many people have rent their consciences in halves—could not you just make a little nick in yours?" "No," he said, "I cannot, for my conscience belongs to God."

"We must live, you know," said a money-loving shopkeeper, as his excuse for doing what he could not otherwise defend. "Yes, but we must die," was the reply, "and therefore we must do no such thing." There is no particular necessity for any of us living. We are probably better dead if we cannot live without doing wrong. The very essence of obedience, I have said, lies in *exactness*. Probably your child, if sometimes disobedient, would still, as a general rule, do what you told him. It would be in the *little* things that thoroughgoing and commendable obedience would appear. Let the world judge of this for itself. Here is an honest man. Do people say of him, "He is such an honest man that he would not steal a horse"? No, that would not prove him to be very honest. But they say, "He would not even take a pin that did not belong to him."

That is the world's *own* description of honesty, and surely when it comes to obedience to God it ought to be the same! Here is a merchant, and he boasts, "I have a clerk who is such a good accountant that you would not find a mistake of a single penny in six months' reckoning." It would not have meant much if he had said, "You would not find a mistake of 10,000 pounds in six months' reckoning." And yet if a man stands to little things, and is minute and particular, worldlings charge him with being too stringent, too strict, too strait-laced and I know not what besides! While all the time, according to their own showing, the essence of honesty and of correctness is exactness in little things. If I profess to obey the Lord Jesus Christ, the crucial test will not be in *great* actions, but in *little* ones.

My dear Brethren, I wish the Christian Church really thought this. There is so much in many Churches of trifling with words—I mean by people professing to believe what is not believed—putting another meaning upon words than what is the plain natural sense which is nothing better, I conceive, than lying in the sight of God. I know, too, members of Churches who say, "I do not approve of a great deal that is in our creed," and yet they remain members of such a Church! I do not understand it! I cannot comprehend how a man can bear to partake in the doings of any Church, whatever that Church may be, when he knows those doings to be wrong—making it a part of his religion to *do* wrong—winking at and shutting his eyes to what his own conscience tells him is not according to the will of God.

If I thought that in any of our proceedings in this place we did not do according to God's mind, I would humbly desire to alter at once. And I do pray that we, as a Church—whenever we err, or in anything may not have acted according to Scripture—I pray that we may be willing to bring ourselves to holy Scripture, and to be always schooling our minds to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ so that we may do His will in all things. The Church may be wrong in a great many points, and yet be accepted before God because the conscience of the Church may not be enlightened. But what I plead for is that so far as our conscience is enlightened, we are bound to act up to it and that we have no right to do anything about which we cannot be sure that we are right, and no right to be uniting ourselves to any body of professors who are not carrying out the Lord's commands and Laws in all things so far as we can judge. Not in *some* things, but in *all* things we are to be observant of the Divine will.

Is there any ordinance of Christ which some of you have never attended to? Have you attended to Baptism and the Lord's Supper? I charge you, before the living God, see to it as you value your own peace of mind. "He that knows his master's will, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." I am not now speaking of the discipline of the *Law*—the Christian is not under that—I am speaking, however, of the discipline of Christ's own House, over which Christ is the Master, and this is the Law of Christ's House—if we will not be obedient we shall not abide in the comfortable enjoyment of His love but we shall be chastened, and scourged, and smitten until we become willing to yield ourselves up to the Lord's mind.

Through thick and thin, through fair and foul, through poverty or wealth, through shame or honor, Christian, cling close to your Master! Be among those virgin-souls, who—

***“Where ever the Lamb does lead,
From His footsteps never depart.”***

Those are the men who shall be honored of Heaven, who have peace with God unspeakable within their souls today, and shall have the brightest crowns of immortality upon their brows tomorrow. The exactness of obedience is the very essence of obedience. Let us keep to it, then.

III. But now, thirdly, THE PATH OF OBEDIENCE IS GENERALLY A MIDDLE PATH. “Turn not from it, to the right hand or to the left.” There is sure to be a right hand. There is sure to be a left hand, and both are probably wrong. There will be extremes on either side. I believe that this is true in 10,000 things in ordinary life, and also true in *spiritual* things in very many respects. The path of truth in doctrine is generally a middle one. There are certain tremendous Truths of God, such as Divine Sovereignty, the doctrine of Election, Covenant transactions, and so forth. And some men cast such a loving eye upon these Truths that they desire to be, and are, quite blind to all other Truths besides. These great and precious doctrines take up the whole field of their vision while another and equally valuable part of God’s Word is either left unread, or else twisted round into some supposed reconciliation with the first-named Truths.

Then, again, there are others who think much of *man*. They have deep sympathy with the human race. They see man’s sin and ruin, and they are much charmed with the mercy of God and the invitations of the Gospel which are given to sinners. They become so entranced with *these* Truths in connection with the responsibility of man, and man’s free agency, that they will see nothing else! They declare all other doctrines, except these, to be delusions! If they admit the doctrines of Grace to be true, they think them valueless—but they generally consider them to be untrue altogether. It seems to me that the path of Truth is to believe them both—to hold firmly that salvation is by Divine Grace, and to hold with *equal* firmness that the ruin of any man is wholly and entirely his own fault.

We must maintain the Sovereignty of God and hold the *responsibility* of *man* also—to believe in the free agency of both God and man—neither to dishonor God by making Him a lackey to His creatures’ will, nor, on the other hand, to rid man of all responsibility by making him to be a mere log or a machine. Take *all* that is in the Bible, dear Friends, to be true! Never be afraid of any text that is written by the sacred pen. Dear Brothers and Sisters, when you turn the pages over, I hope you never feel as if you wish that any verse could be altered. I trust you never desire that *any* text might be amended so as to read a little more Calvinistic, or a little more like the teaching of Arminius. Always stand to it that your *creed* must bend to the Bible, and not the Bible to your creed—and dare to be a little inconsistent with yourselves, if need be, sooner than be inconsistent with God’s revealed Truth. You will find the path of duty then, I think, to be neither to the right hand nor to the left.

So I think it is in another respect, in which the tendency is to one of two extremes. Some people say of ministers, “These are God’s priests.

They can distribute grace to us." Others cry out, "No, they do not, and cannot! We are all equally able to dispense the truth. We need none to instruct us! We are all of us to be pastors, or rather, to be sheepish enough to think we are." Now, there, I think, the safe path lies *between* the two. The minister is no priest, but still, God does enable some men, by His Spirit, to teach others. He does raise up pastors after His own heart. We will magnify the office, but we will not magnify it too much. We will not suffer any to speak against it, for we believe it to be a God-sent gift. On the other hand, we will not slavishly prostrate ourselves before any man, however gifted he may be.

You will notice, in connection with the ordinances of God's House, one extreme about sacraments is that they are channels of Divine Grace. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are *saving* ordinances, according to certain ignorant people. The opposite extreme is to leave ordinances alone altogether, and to say there is nothing in them and that it is of no use to attend to them. Surely the proper thing is to believe that, as acts of *obedience*, they are acceptable to God. And as *signs* and tokens of great spiritual Truths, they are instructive and edifying to the saints and therefore not to be neglected. In this matter, I would have you "turn neither to the right hand nor to the left."

So, too, I think it should be in our general conduct. With regard, for instance, to our words, the course of speech generally is, on the one hand to say too much, or on the other hand to say too little—to be silent when the wicked are before us, or else to be rash with our lips and betray a good cause through our rashness in defending it. There is a time to speak, and there is a time to be silent, and he that judges well will mark his opportunities and take the *middle* course. He will neither be garrulous with advice that is not required, nor will he be cowardly and dumb when he ought to bear testimony for his Master.

The same holds good with regard to zeal. We have some abroad nowadays whose heads are very hot. They will be doing this, and that, and I know not what beside—all in the twinkling of an eye! They talk as if they would turn the world upside down, while it is their own brains that need first to be turned into a right condition. They foment revivals, but not revivals such as we should approve of—their revivals are blown up like bladders with mere human excitement and playing upon men's passions—and this brings true zeal into contempt. Theirs is a fire which burns down the house instead of burning in the grate and warming the household! But shall we, therefore, not be zealous? God forbid! Shall we fall into the opposite extreme of those who fold their arms and say, "Why make this noise? God will do His own work. Things will go well enough, let us be quiet, let us sleep as do others"?

Brethren, there is a middle course of true, sensible, prudent zeal—adhering to the Truth of God and never believing that people can be converted by lies, however earnestly bawled into their ears—walking within the bounds of God's Truth, and being persuaded that the best seed to sow is that which God puts into the basket of His Word—that sinners are not to be saved by rash statements nor by extravagant declamation—but that they are brought to Christ as they were of old—by the simple telling out of

the story of the Cross affectionately, and by the power of the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven. Here, again, "turn neither to the right hand nor to the left."

Brethren, this is a point we must take care to observe in the matter of our confidences. Neither to the right hand nor to the left must the Christian turn with regard to the reliance of his soul or in the matter of his eternal salvation. "None but Jesus" must be the constant watchword of our spirit. Some will call us in this direction, and some in that. The wrecker's beacons would entice us upon the rocks in a thousand directions, but let us steer by the sun or by the polestar, and not trust to the treacherous guides of human fancy. Keep close to this, that "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ the righteous."

Rest in the finished work of the Lord Jesus and put all your reliance upon Him as crucified, risen, and pleading for His people! Settle it in your hearts that you are not to be led away from Jesus—

***"Should all the forms that men devise,
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to my heart."***

So in the matter of faith itself, let us keep the middle place. Let us not be as some are—presumptuous and refusing to examine themselves, declaring that they *must* be right. Let us remember that—

***"He who never doubted of his state,
He may—perhaps he may too late."***

Let us not fall, on the other side, into constant doubting, imagining that we never can be fully assured, but must always be raising the question—

***" '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?"***

Let us ask God to guide us into the middle path, in which we can say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him until that day." Let us pray for Grace to be careful, watchful, prayerful as much as if our salvation depended upon our own vigilance—relying upon the sure promise and the immutable oath, knowing that we stand in Christ, and not in ourselves—and are kept by the mighty God of Jacob, and not by any power of our own.

This middle path, in which we turn not to the right hand of presumption, nor to the left hand of unbelief, is the path which God would have us tread. This rule, too, for I might continue to apply it in scores of ways, will also hold good with you in your daily life in the matter of your general cheerfulness or otherwise. Some people never smile. Dear souls! They pull the blinds down on Sunday. They are sorry that the flowers are so beautiful and think that they ought to have been whitewashed. They almost believe that if the garden beds were of a little more serious color, it would be advisable. I have known some, and some whom I very greatly respect, talk in this way. One good Brother, whose shoelace I am not worthy to unloose, said, on one occasion, that when he went up the Rhine, he never looked at the rocks, or the old castles, or the flowing river—he was too

taken up with other things! Why, to me nature is a looking-glass in which I see the face of God! I delight to gaze abroad, and—

“Look through nature up to nature's God.”

But that was all unholiness to him. I confess I do not understand that kind of thing. I have no sympathy with those who look upon this material world as though it were a very wicked place, and as if there were here no trace whatever of the Divine hand and no proofs of the Divine wisdom, nor manifestations of the Divine care. I think we may delight ourselves in the works of God and find much pleasure in them and get much advanced towards God Himself by considering His works.

That to which I have thus referred is one extreme. There are others who are all froth and levity, who profess to be Christians, and yet cannot live without the same amusements as worldlings. They must be now at this party, and then at that. They are never comfortable unless they are making jokes and following after all the levities and frivolities of the world. Ah, the first is a pardonable weakness in which there is much that is commendable. But this is a detestable one of which I can say nothing that is good. The Christian, I think, should steer between the two. He should be cheerful, but not frivolous. He should be sustained and happy, under all circumstances have a friendly and a kindly word for all. He should be a man among men as the Savior was, willing to sit at the banquet and to feast and rejoice with those that rejoice. But still he should be heavenly-minded in it all, feeling that a joy in which he cannot have Christ with him is no joy, and that places of amusement where he cannot take his Lord with him are no places of amusement but scenes of misery to him.

He should be constantly cheerful, happy, and rejoicing, and yet at the same time he should have a deep solemnity of spirit which removes far from him everything that is sacrilegiously light and trifling. By the same rule arrange your business. Some men in business act in such a way that from morning till night they can think of nothing but business. I have had to mourn over some Christians who, when they have had enough, did not know it—when they were doing as much as they could do with health to their souls, and had no more need of gain—yet they must launch out into something else that would take away all opportunities of serving God's cause—and all time for reflection and thought—and would thus bring barrenness and leanness into their souls.

Others we have to complain of who do not work enough at their callings. They are at a sermon when they ought to be behind the counter, or they are enjoying a Prayer Meeting when they ought to be mending their husbands' stockings. They go out preaching in the villages when they had better be earning money to pay their creditors. There are extremes, but the true Christian is diligent in business, and is also fervent in spirit, seeking to combine the two. The Believer should be like one of old, “a just man and devout,” not having one duty smeared with the blood of another duty. Having a due proportion of all the Divine Graces, he seeks in his life to follow out his calling as a man, as a parent, as a member of the Church, or whatever else he may be.

IV. Now we shall close, and our last remark is that **THE PATH OF RIGHT IS THE PATH OF TRUE PROSPERITY**. Observe the last paragraph of the text: “That you may prosper where ever you go.” Let no man be de-

ceived with the idea that if he carries out the right, by God's Grace, he will prosper in this world as the *consequence*. It is very likely that, for a time at least, his conscientiousness will stand in the way of his prosperity! God does not invariably make the doing of the right to be the means of pecuniary gain to us. On the contrary, it frequently happens that for a time men are great losers by their obedience to Christ.

But the Scripture always speaks to us of the *long* run—it sums up the *whole* of life—*there* it promises true riches! If you would prosper, keep close to the Word of God, and to your conscience, and you shall have the best prosperity. You will not see it in a week, nor a month, nor a year, but you shall enjoy it before long. Hundreds have I seen, and I speak within bounds when I speak of that number, who in different times of dilemma have waited upon me and asked my advice as to what they should do. Now, Brothers and Sisters, I have almost always noticed that those persons who temporize, or attempt to find a policy of going between and doing as little wrong as possible, but still just a little, always blunder out of one ditch into another! And their whole life is a life of compromises, of sins, and of miseries. If they do get to Heaven they go there slipshod, and with thorns piercing their feet all the way.

But I have noticed others who have come right straight out and torn away the cords which entangled them, and have said, "I will do the right, if I die for it." And though they have had to suffer (I could mention some cases where they have suffered for *years*, very much to the sorrow of him who gave them the advice upon which they acted, not because he regretted giving them the advice, but regretted that they had to suffer), yet always there has been a turn somewhere or other, and by-and-by they have had to say, "I thank God after all, notwithstanding all my crosses and losses, that I was led to be faithful to my convictions, for I am a *happier* man, if not a richer man."

In some cases they have absolutely been *richer* men, for, after all, even in this world, "honesty is the best policy." It is a very low way of looking at it, but right and righteousness do, in the end—in the long run—get the respect and the esteem of men. The thief, though he takes a short way to get rich, yet takes such a dangerous way that it does not pay. But he who walks straight along the narrow road shall find it to be the shortest way to the best kind of prosperity, both in this world and in that which is to come. If not, Beloved, if we get no outward prosperity here, I trust you and I, if we love Christ and are filled with His Spirit, can do without it. If we must be poor, it will soon be over, and in Heaven there shall be no poverty! If we must fight in order to maintain our conscience, remember we did not expect to come into this world that we might—

***"Be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease."***

If it must come to this, that we must suffer hunger and even nakedness itself, we shall not be worse off than the Apostles—better men than we. We shall not be brought lower than the martyrs—with whose names we are not worthy to have ours coupled. Let us, then, run all risks for Christ! He is no soldier who cannot die for his country. He is no Christian who cannot lose his life for Christ. We must be willing to give up all things rather than sell the Truth of God or sell the right. And if we come to this,

we shall have such courage within our spirits, such a quiet consciousness of the Presence of God the Holy Spirit, and such sweet smiles from the once suffering, but now reigning Savior that we shall have to bless God all our days for these light afflictions which are but for a moment—which shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!

I may not have spoken much to the comfort of God's people, but I shall be glad if I have said only half a word that may tend to nurture in the midst of our Church earnest obedience, practical piety, real positive godliness carried out in ordinary life. We have plenty of doctrine, plenty of thinking, plenty of talking, but oh, for more holy *acting!* It is sickening to see the inconsistencies of some professors. It is enough, indeed, to make the world ridicule the Church to see how many profess to follow Christ, and then keep any rule rather than God's rule, and obey anybody sooner than the Lord Jesus Christ.

Brothers and Sisters, let us pray to God that our hearts may be sincere in the Lord's ways, and that we may be guided by His Spirit even to the end.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Joshua 1.

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THE SCARLET LINE IN THE WINDOW

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“She bound the scarlet line in the window.”
Joshua 2:21.

EVERY little incident in a remarkable conversion like that of the harlot Rahab is worthy of notice. The Apostle James selected her as an illustration of the fact that faith is always attended by good works, and he asks, “Was she not justified by works when she had received the messengers?” while Paul quotes her as an instance of justification by faith, and says, “By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not.” If both these eminent Apostles found an illustration of an important Doctrine in her life, we may surely do the same. If the hiding of the spies under the flax had some significance, so also had the hanging out of the scarlet line.

The two spies whom Rahab had concealed made an agreement with her that she should hang out a scarlet line in the window by which she had let them down, that they might know, in the day of battle, the house in which she dwelt. She fulfilled their request and displayed the chosen emblem. In connection with that scarlet line, I observe four things.

I. First, I see here AN OBEDIENT BELIEVER.

She was told to tie the scarlet thread in the window and she did it—there was *exact obedience*. It was not merely *a* thread, *a* line, but the *scarlet line*. She did not substitute a blue, or a green, or a white line. The order was this scarlet line, not another, and she took that particular one. Obedience to God will be very much seen in small matters. Love always delights to attend to the little things and thereby makes the little things great. I have heard of a Puritan who was charged with being too precise, but his answer was excellent, “I serve a precise God.” The Lord our God is a jealous God and He is very jealous of His commands. It appeared a little mistake that Moses made when he struck the rock instead of speaking to it, and yet he could not enter into the promised rest because of his offense! A small action may involve a great principle and it is for us to be very cautious and careful, searching out what the Master’s will is, and then never halting or hesitating for any reason whatever, but doing His will as soon as we know it. Christian life should be a mosaic of minute obediences. The soldiers of Christ should be famous for their exact discipline.

I commend scrupulous obedience to all of you and especially to those young people who have lately made a profession of their faith in Christ. Do not be as your fathers were, for the generation which is now going off the stage neither reads its Bible nor cares to know the Lord's will. If people searched the Scriptures, we would find them come together in union—but the least-read book in all the world, in proportion to its circulation, is the Word of God. It is distributed everywhere, but it is scarcely read anywhere with care and attention—and with a sincere resolve to follow its precepts at all hazards. You come and listen to us and we give you little bits taken from it here and there, but you do not get a fair notion of it as a whole. How can you? Ministers make mistakes and you follow them without enquiry. One elects this leader, and another that, to the creation of varieties of opinions and even of sects which ought not to be—and would not be if all stood fast by the standard of the Inspired Truth of God. If the Bible were but read and prayed over, many errors would die a speedy death and others would be sorely crippled. Had that Inspired Book been read in the past, many errors would never have arisen! Search, then, the Book of God, I pray you—and whatever you find there, be sure to attend to it! At all costs, keep to the Word of God.

Notice, next, that hers was *obedience in a very small matter*. She might have said, "I do not think it is essential to tie a piece of line in my window. Can I not be preserved just as well without it, seeing that I believe in the God of Israel? I have faith and I have shown it by my works by hiding the spies—you cannot suppose for a moment that I shall perish simply because I have not complied with a regulation about a scarlet line!" In this way many, nowadays, enquire whether they may not omit those duties which they consider to be non-essential to salvation. Now this is a question which I never intend to answer for anybody else because I never intend to ask it on my own account! Whether or not a Believer will perish because some known duty or Scriptural ordinance is neglected, is a question which only selfishness would raise! Are we only to do that which will procure our progress, or secure our salvation? Are we so grossly selfish as that? Does a loving child say, "If I refuse to do my father's will, shall I not still be my father's child? Shall I not still be fed and clothed by him?" Only an evil child would talk thus! The true son enquires, "What would my father have me do? I will do it cheerfully for his sake. What does my father forbid? For what he forbids shall be hateful to me." Rise above all questions concerning essential and non-essential and learn to *obey in all things*—if it is only tying a scarlet thread in the window, or washing in water, do as you are bid—and in nothing rebel against the Word of the Lord!

Remember, too, that this small matter of obedience, as some call it, had *an important symbolical significance*. I am not sure that the spies meant by it that the scarlet thread would be the same to Rahab as the blood on the lintel and on the two side posts had been to Israel in Egypt, but it does strike me as being very probable. Those two men were so ac-

quainted with the Passover, the sprinkling of the blood and the consequent preservation of all in this house, that it was very natural that they should give Rahab a sign akin to the token which God had ordained for His people Israel when His angel passed them by in the day of doom. Therefore, trifling as the color of the cord might seem, it had a deep significance—and even so the commands of God, which are little in themselves—are great in symbolic teaching. Great errors have come into the Christian Church by the alteration of simple points in God's commands and, therefore, since a little thing in the sign may involve a great thing in the substance, it becomes us to cultivate exact obedience!

“Oh,” says one, “but I fear we shall always be in error.” Assuredly we shall unless we endeavor to avoid it! Unless we give abundant attention to the Word of God, we shall fall into mistakes beyond number! Errors are unavoidable if we do not study our perfect Chart, even as it is certain that a man will lose his way if he never enquires about it. At any rate, we need not rush into mistakes by omitting to use our judgment and to inform our understanding. Ask the Lord to teach you by His Holy Spirit and you will not be taught wrongly. Commit yourself to His instruction and be willing to do what He teaches you—and you will not go amiss.

This woman's obedience also arose out of real faith and was the exponent of that faith, for when she tied the scarlet line in the window, she expressed her confidence in the fact that Jericho would be destroyed and that she would be saved because she had received a promise to that effect. She would not have hidden the spies if she had not believed in their God! And after having done so, if her faith had failed her, she would not have complied with the Covenant requirement to hang the scarlet line in the window. Beloved, obey in faith! The obedience of the slave is worth little. The obedience of the child is precious, for it is the fruit of love. That keeping of God's Commands which comes of slavish fear lacks the very heart of obedience, for love is absent, but, as God's dear children, resting alone in Jesus and confiding in your Father's promise, feel that *because you believe you must obey*, not because you dread Hell or expect to win Heaven through any works of your own—but because you have believed in Jesus to the salvation of your soul and, therefore, it is your joy to do His bidding.

Thus I have enlarged upon the first point of the text, that in the hanging out of the scarlet line, I discern an obedient Believer.

II. Now, secondly, I see here AN APPROPRIATED COVENANT.

These men had made a covenant with her that she would have her life spared, and the lives of her family, if she concealed their secret and if she tied a scarlet line in the window. As she tied up that line she did, as it were, say, “I claim the covenant that you have made with me.” Beloved, let us speak about this for a moment, for we need more and more to be able to appropriate Covenant blessings. How do we appropriate Jesus? *By simple faith.* Faith is the hand which touches the head of the Great

Sacrifice and lays sin upon it, that sin may no longer lie upon the sinner. Faith grasps Jesus as the Bread of Life and makes that Bread to be our own, that we may feed upon it and may live forever. Thus the grand thing for appropriating Christ is to obtain faith and to gain more and more faith. Do you remember when you first tied a scarlet line in your window and said, "Christ is mine"? I remember the very hour and the precise spot, but many cannot tell the moment or the occasion—nor need they agitate themselves about it if they still continue to tie that line in its place! Still, you do remember that there was such a time when you could say, "Jesus is mine." You apprehended Christ because He had apprehended you. If such an hour as that has never come to you, may it come even now! Jesus Christ can save you, but He must be appropriated, or He will be no Savior to you. Remember that God the Holy Spirit, Himself, though He is the Author of faith, cannot believe for you—you must personally believe for yourself.

Certain persons talk very much of repentance as the gift of the Holy Spirit—their witness would be true if they would not exaggerate it so as to leave the impression on men's minds that the Holy Spirit repents and that the sinner has little or nothing to do with it, for that is not true! It is clear that the Holy Spirit has nothing to repent of—repentance is an act of the repenting sinner's own soul—and faith a personal exercise of the heart, "for with the heart man believes unto righteousness." If we do not, ourselves, repent and believe, Christ is not ours and we are none of His and neither shall we obtain any benefit from His life and death. Tie the scarlet line in your window, for it will not be tied there for you—you must do it with your own hands. And I do pray that even now you may have boldness through Christ to say, "Yes, Jesus shall be mine. I dare with humble confidence to appropriate Him for myself, since He is given freely to poor needy sinners—and I am such a sinner."

Faith is the first and grandest way of tying the scarlet line in the window, but let your faith follow on in *the use of the ordinances and means of Grace*, for these assist her in laying hold upon Jesus. I have often found it most blessed to sit at the Communion Table and feel, while I ate the bread and drank the wine, that faith was in active exercise, so that I said to myself, "Yes, as certainly as this bread is put into my mouth and goes into my bodily system, so as to become a part of myself, so that nobody can ever take it away—even so I have by faith believed on and received into my soul the Incarnate God and in that way He has become mine so that none can separate Him from me, or me from Him." The ordinance itself will not give you Christ, but often does the symbol blessedly enable the soul to realize Jesus and contemplate Him so as to partake of Him. In that draught of wine, so typical of His blood, how often has our soul said, "I rest entirely upon the Redeemer's bloody Sacrifice. His substitutionary pangs, griefs and merits are all my trust before God and I receive them as my sole reliance for the remission of sin, and take them into my very self, just as I drink of this cup and thereby the juice of the

vine courses through my veins.” Continue, Beloved Friends, thus to appropriate Jesus Christ and let every communion season be a tying of the scarlet line afresh in the window!

Let *your whole life* be a course of action correspondent to the belief that Christ is yours. I am afraid many Believers live as though Jesus Christ did not belong to them at all, nor yet the blessings of the Covenant. Do you think that we would be so desponding when we have losses in business if we really believed that all things are ours? And if we had tied the scarlet line in the window and appropriated all things as ours in Christ? Do you think we would be so soon flustered and made to doubt whether we are saved or not in times of temptation, if our faith took a firm grip of Christ and tied the scarlet line in the window fast and firm by claiming the Covenant of Grace as ours? Beloved, some of you have only appropriated a part of Christ! You believe you are pardoned, but you scarcely know that you are justified! You are justified and covered with His righteousness, but you have not laid hold upon the sanctification which Jesus gives you. You have a measure of Grace, but you have not yet believed that Christ can sanctify you wholly—spirit, soul and body. We are stunted and stunted, lean and lethargic because of our failure to grasp with holy confidence the Infinite Treasure which is stored up in our all-sufficient Lord! He is ours and all things are ours in Him! “According to your faith be it unto you,” is the rule of that great house over which Christ presides. This woman took the covenant which she had made with these men to be hers and showed that she did so by tying the scarlet line in the window. The Covenant of Grace was made with her and she knew it—and believed it, in like manner! O Brothers and Sisters in Christ, by a living faith grasp the promises of God and claim them as your own!

Here let me also say, *let us do this by displaying a corresponding restfulness*. After Rahab had tied the line in her window, we do not read that she did anything else except bring her father, her mother and her brethren under her roof. She did not make preparations to defend the house against the siege. There is no notification that she appealed to the king to have a special guard to protect that part of the wall. I do not believe that she had a solitary fear, or a moment’s terror—the scarlet line was in the window and she felt secure! She had appropriated the promise and she believed it would not be broken. It is a high privilege to dwell peaceably and quietly in the finished work of Christ—and in the sure Immutable promise of God, who cannot lie. Why fret yourselves and question yourselves, and go about with a thousand anxieties when salvation’s work was finished on the accursed tree and Christ has gone into Glory and has carried His perfect work before His Father’s face? Why mourn and suspect your safety when the Lord has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Him? We who have believed enter into rest! The peace of God is ours, so let us, by our resting, show that we have tied the scarlet line in our window, have claimed the finished work

of Christ and, therefore, rest henceforth from our own works as God did from His!

III. Thirdly, I see here AN OPEN DECLARATION.

Rahab tied the scarlet line, not in some secret part of the house, but *in the window*. It was her public declaration of faith. I do not say that everybody understood what she meant by that—only those understood it who were in the secret with her—and that sufficed. She hung out the red signal from the window where it could be seen by those who needed to see it. It was not that she was ostentatious and wished to attract attention—but she was bound to make a public sign and she did it. Now, some of you believe in my Lord Jesus and yet you have never united with His people. You are resting in Him, but you are mightily afraid that anybody should know it. Be not ashamed of Jesus! The wonder is that He is not ashamed of you! If He was not ashamed to take upon Him your nature and die for you, you need never blush to acknowledge His name! Come forward, you trembling ones! Tie the scarlet line in your window and say, “We are His, and we confess it.”

Let it be *a scarlet line* that you tie in the window, however—namely an avowal of true faith in His precious blood, a declaration of confidence in atonement by blood—for there are some who profess a sort of faith, but it is not faith in the Substitution of Christ. It is unfashionable, nowadays, to believe in the old Doctrine of Atonement. Modern “culture” has expunged it, or altered it in such a way that no real Atonement is left. There are many who are too advanced to avow the old-fashioned Gospel, but as for us, we tie forever the scarlet line in our window and stand by the Truth once delivered to the saints! Our declaration of faith is that we believe in the real and literal Substitution of Christ who died, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” In the midst of a thousand new gospels—none of them worth the breath that utters them—we hold to that ancient Gospel of the Prophet Isaiah, “the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed.” Beloved Believer, if the Doctrine of the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ and His substitutionary Atonement is your hope, acknowledge it! Acknowledge it boldly and let there be no mistake about it in these evil times! Tie the scarlet line in your window and if nobody else will see it, your Brothers and Sisters will and be encouraged. If nobody else will be pleased with it, your God will smile upon you and you will be a sweet savor unto Him. No man that I know of saw the blood upon the lintel and the two side posts, at the dead of night, in the land of Egypt, for there were none abroad to look upon it—but God saw it, and it is written—“When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” When God sees our simple confidence in His dear Son and perceives us resting upon His Word without the admixture of human reason and opinion, then, Beloved, He will accept us in the Beloved and our house shall stand when others fall!

Every Christian ought to make his faith in the precious blood visible in many ways. It ought to be manifest in our common conversation. If we

are resting in the blood of Jesus, we ought not to be able to talk a quarter of an hour without thoughtful persons perceiving that we are followers of Jesus. I have heard of a man who was so entertaining and instructive in his conversation that it was said that you could not stand under an archway for five minutes with him, to get out of the rain, without learning something from him. Every Christian ought to be of this sort in a higher style—so that you cannot be with him many minutes without perceiving him to be a man of God. Of course in the Church of Christ, the Christian ought to hang a scarlet line out of his door at once and let his fellow worshippers see that he is decided and resolute for the Lord, his God—and he ought to do the same in his business. Customers should soon see that in your shop the common tricks of the trade are detested! The scarlet line is over this door. In the house, the mistress in the management of her servants, the master as a husband and as a father should be known to be better than others. There is a certain sect of people called, “the peculiar people.” I wish we were all peculiar people in this respect, that the blood mark set us apart as not our own, but bought with a price! The Lord grant that it may be so with us!

IV. The last point is this. Here was A DEDICATED HOUSE—a house with a scarlet line in its window.

Coming here, the other afternoon, and walking down one of the back streets, I amused myself by observing how many houses were insured. I noticed the marks of the different Insurance Companies. There was *the sun* on one, with his bright face looking down upon us, as much as to say, “There shall be no loss here.” The *globe*, *the star*, *the Phoenix*—all were there as seals of safety. Now there was only one house in Jericho that was insured—and that had for its symbol and mark of insurance a scarlet line tied in the window! What a mercy it is when houses are insured by the Grace of God and dedicated to the Lord—the very houses and much more—the inhabitants of those houses! How can you dedicate a house? I was reading, the other day, that in Cromwell’s time you could go down Cheapside at a certain hour in the morning and you would see the blinds down at every house and hear the families singing, all the way along, “for,” says an old Divine, “in those days, a drawn blind was the scarlet line in the window.” People knew, as they passed along, that there was an altar erected to God in that house. I am afraid that there are a great many streets in our towns and cities which you might traverse at any hour of the day and not discover a solitary sign of *family prayer* going on. The practice has gone out of fashion even among many who profess to be the people of God—and farewell to any progress in godliness till we bring it back again!

I believe that when the house and the Church pull together, things are right. But when religion is made to be a thing of the Church and not of the house—when the priest is looked to instead of the father, when men cease to be priests in their own houses—then the very sinews of vital

godliness have been cut. If I had to give up all weekday services and shut up every place of worship in Christendom from Sunday to Sunday, I would prefer to do that rather than lose the morning and evening gatherings of devout households worshipping God! How much Scotland owes to her family devotions! You need not that I remind you of "The Cotter's Saturday Night." It is the very glory of that country that they worship God in their houses. "There is much formality about it," cries one! Well, was there ever anything good which did not degenerate here and there? But I have witnessed, full many a time, the hearty devotion of morning and evening prayer in the North. I wonder how many houses represented by you come up to Matthew Henry's third standard. He says, "Those who pray, do well." You get up to that, I hope. "Those that read the Scriptures and pray, do better. Those that read the Scriptures and pray and sing, do best of all." I think so. This is the scarlet line with the threefold cord to it, and I would that every house hung out that scarlet line as meaning, "This house belongs to King Jesus. The devil need not trouble himself to come here, for the strong man armed keeps his goods in peace."

The beauty of it was that *all inside Rahab's house were saved*. "Come in, dear Mother," she said. Who among us could bear the thought of our mother being lost? It breaks our hearts to think of such a thing! My mother lost? Oh, no, that must not be! And your father lost? Oh, have you an unconverted father? I beseech you, give no slumber to your eyelids till you have done all you can to set before him the way of peace and have pleaded for him before God with sighs and tears! And then she said, "Come in, dear brothers and sisters." I delight in Rahab for loving her household. If you have brothers and sisters who are not yet under the scarlet line, pray to God to bring them in that all your house may be dedicated to the Most High and, without exception, all may dwell beneath the blessed blood red token which Infallibly preserves all who are sheltered beneath it!

I leave this point to notice that there are other things besides family prayer which should be like the scarlet line in the house. For instance, there should be in every Christian house a scarlet line put up in *the selecting of the company that is kept*. The Christian should carefully *select his friends and associates*. He should say, "He that tells lies shall not tarry in my sight." As for the drunkard, the swearer and those who use unchaste language, let them be what they may—they shall not visit within our doors—we will not tolerate them! If we are masters of our household, we try to find our children friends whom we should like to be their companions in eternity. Some parents introduce their children to young men and young women who happen to be "very respectable," as they say, but who are worldly and ungodly—and thus they do much to ruin them! It should not be so. Hang the scarlet line over the door and if they do not love that scarlet line, religious conversation will before long make the place too hot for them! If you talk much of Jesus, the frivolous will consider that they have notice to leave and stay away!

A Christian's house should have a scarlet line over *its reading*. I confess to great sorrow whenever I see in a Christian's house, commonly laid about for the use of the girls, that dreadful rubbishing yellow stuff which pollutes every railway bookstall—much of it downright ungodliness and the best of it abominable nonsense—the reading of which is a sheer waste of time! When there are thousands of good and interesting books to be read, it seems a pity that Christian people should give their time to reading trash which cannot profit them. Let the asses have their thistles, I never grudge them! And so I will not say that worldlings should not read such books—they suit them—let them have them. I have never murmured at a farmer when I have seen him going along with his great mash of all manner of garbage to give to his hogs—as long as he did not give me a basin of it for dinner, I was satisfied to let the swine have their food! And there are a great many romances and a vast mass of literature which it is vain to deny to ungodly people, for it is after their nature. But as for us, let us have none of it! I should as soon expect to see the archangel Gabriel feeding out of a hog's trough, as to see one who is a joint-heir with Christ finding his pleasure in books that are half lewd and the other half absurd. Hang a scarlet line over your library door as well as everywhere else!

So let it be with *all amusements*. There are some amusements that we cannot say are absolutely bad in themselves, but they lead to evil. They go up to the edge of the precipice—and there are many who only need to get so far and they are sure to fall over. Besides, they make the Christian so like the worldling that nobody could tell which is which! Now, tie the scarlet line up! I would do so even as to what *pictures* I would hang up in my house. I am often sad to see, especially in the houses of the poor—Roman Catholic pictures exhibited on the walls because they happen to be rather pretty and very cheap. Popish publishers have very cleverly managed to get up pictures of the Virgin and the lying fable of her assumption to Heaven and all sorts of legends of saints. And being brightly colored and sold very much under cost, these vile things have been introduced into thousands of houses. I have seen to my horror a picture of God the Father represented as an old man—a conception almost too hideous to mention—yet the picture is hung up in the cottages of England! Whereas the Lord has declared that we should make no image of Him, or represent Him in any way—and even the attempt is blasphemous! If you have a bad picture, no matter how good a work of art it is, burn it! And if you have a bad book, no matter how much it may be worth, do not sell it for somebody else to read—tear it in pieces!

Let the Christian hang up the scarlet line and make certain that nobody shall be debauched in mind or body by anything that he tolerates in his house! I may seem to be too severe, but if my Master were to speak out of Heaven, He would not rebuke that as a sin on my part—rather He

would say that we need to be much more precise and decided about evil things.

Well, you shall do what you please—you have your own liberty—but, “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,” and the blood red line shall be in my window! My father’s father, do I not remember how, when I was a child, I used to hear his prayers for my father and for me? Well do I remember my father’s conversion in answer to my grandfather’s prayers. And my father, can I ever forget how he wrestled for us at the Mercy Seat and God forbid it should happen that in my son’s house, in years to come, there should be no altar to my God! I would sooner be without a tent for myself than without an altar for the Lord! Wherever we are, we must hang up the scarlet line! We cannot expect a blessing if we do not. Of course I am not speaking to those who are not fathers or heads of households. If they are servants, they cannot help what is done in the house. If they are underlings who have not the power, they cannot arrange as they would. But I am speaking to those who fear the Lord and can do it. Do, Beloved, dedicate your house to God from the attic to the cellar. Let there be nothing even in the cellar which you would be ashamed for Jesus Christ to see. Let there be nothing about the house but what shall be so ordered that if your Lord should come, you could open your door and say, “Come and welcome, Master! There is nothing here that Your servant desires to conceal.”

Believe in Jesus, O you who know Him not! And you who know Him, practice what you know. And God bless you! Amen and Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CHRONICLES 21:9-20.**

Verses 9-11. *And the LORD spoke unto Gad, David’s seer, saying, Go and tell David, saying, Thus says the LORD, I offer you three things: choose one of them, that I may do it unto you. So Gad came to David and said unto him, Thus says the LORD, Choose. David was to choose where there was no choice, for everything proposed to him seemed to be equally bitter.*

12, 13. *Either three years famine, or three months to be destroyed before your foes, while that the sword of your enemies overtake you, or else three days the sword of the LORD, even the pestilence in the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. Now therefore advise yourself what word I shall bring again to Him that sent me. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hands the LORD; for very great are His mercies: but let me not fall into the hands of man. It shows how he was broken down. David’s proud heart was humbled. He was entirely submissive to the will of God. He wished to fall into the hands of the Lord.*

14, 15. *So the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy*

it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld. It is a very beautiful word—the Lord looked steadfastly on what was being done.

15. *And He repented Him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now your hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. One of the old inhabitants of the land who had escaped destruction—and had his possession on the top of Mount Morah.*

16, 17. *And David lifted up his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the Heavens, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces and said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? Even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed, but as for these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray You, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on Your people, that they should be plagued.* Here the great heart of the man who had sinned comes out again—he is no tyrant, after all—he is a worthy man to be the Viceroy of the Most High. He has the same spirit that Moses had when he cried, “If not, blot my name out of the Book of Life.” He offers himself, not the innocent for the guilty, but, indeed, the guilty for the guilty! As far as he can, he will bear the consequences of his sin.

18-20. *Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up and set up an altar unto the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spoke in the name of the LORD. And Ornan turned back and saw the angel. He was busy at his threshing and he saw the angel standing by his own threshing floor .*

20. *And his four sons with him hid themselves. There are great caverns hard by the spot and, no doubt, they ran into one of them.*

20-23. *Now Ornan was threshing wheat. And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshing floor and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground. Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshing floor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: you shall grant it to me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people. And Ornan said unto David, Take it and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes. So, I give you the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering. I give it all. And as we are told in the other narrative, as a king gives to a king, so did Ornan unto David. Probably he had been a king and David had dispossessed him in his conquest of Jebus, but now he proves that he had a royal heart and he offers to give all to King David.*

24, 25. *And King David said to Ornan, No, but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is yours, for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost. So David gave to Ornan for the place six hun-*

dred shekels of gold by weight. Not paid then and there, for he did not carry that amount with him, but fifty shekels of silver were paid that moment to bind their bargain according to the narrative in the 2nd Book of Samuel.

26, 27. *And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and He answered him from Heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering. And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword into the sheath thereof.* That God had already done in His own intent and purpose, now He does it actually, just as before Jesus Christ, our great Sacrifice, was offered, God, in the eternal purpose, had stayed the sword of vengeance from His redeemed people and then actually did it when Christ, their Sacrifice was presented.

28-30. *At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon. But David could not go before it to enquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD.*

—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.**

UNTRODDEN WAYS

NO. 1057

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 23, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For you have not passed this way before.”
Joshua 3:4.***

THEY had come out of Egypt. They had gone up and down in the wilderness, but they had never before crossed the Jordan. It was new ground to them, a new difficulty, and a new series of events lay before them. As a fresh emergency had arisen, they had new orders direct from the Lord, their leader, and Joshua and his officers were busy going throughout the host to communicate the Divine directions. Beloved, when it shall be our lot to come into new positions we shall always obtain renewed guidance from the Spirit of God if we will but wait upon Him for it and cry, “Show me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path.”

It is a most important matter with all of us who are Believers in Christ that our faith should be in a thoroughly sound condition. It is not only grievous to ourselves, but dishonoring to God when our faith falls to a low ebb. To see a distrustful Christian is to see a man who is robbing God of His Glory. Since the Holy Spirit so vehemently cries, “Comfort you, comfort you My people; speak comfortably to Jerusalem,” we may safely come to the conclusion that it is solemnly important that the saints should be comforted, and that for them to lose their comfort is a very grievous thing. He glorifies God most whose faith staggers least. To maintain faith in full vigor is, therefore, a most important matter.

Now there is one very severe trial of faith which will happen to us all, and probably has already occurred to most of us. It is that of a change of trials, a passing into new territory, an entrance into novel circumstances. There is a conservative tendency about most of us so that we build our nest and would gladly live and die in it. Even if we are ill at ease in our present circumstances, this feeling—

***“Makes us rather bear the ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of.”***

Some spirits are given to change and would almost leap from the pan into the fire, but others of us take root deeply and dread transplanting. We know the present and we dread the unknown tomorrow. We are familiar with wilderness tribulations, but we shudder at the Jordan which lies before us and the giants and the chariots of iron which are yet to be encountered.

We are not given to change, but are far more likely to settle upon our lees. We would gladly abide where we are and make no experiment of novel circumstances. This principle is so strongly developed in certain minds that they have even been afraid to learn Truths of God which are new to them! From the milk diet of their spiritual infancy they are unwilling to be weaned even though strong meat awaits them. They were

not taught certain sublime Truths in their early days, and therefore they wish not to be instructed now. Like the aged man in Solomon's proverb, they are afraid of that which is high.

The doctrine of *Election*—they see how full of comfort it is, but not having heard it preached before, they feel afraid to hear it and accept it. That “wine on the lees well refined” they will not drink, because up to now it has not been poured into their cup. We have known such persons to be suspicious of spiritual attainments—they have been victims of doubts and fears so long that they are now afraid to believe! As for full Assurance, they are as much alarmed at it as if it were a crime rather than a Divine Grace! They regard it as dangerous presumption, and put it far from them. Holy courage, brave reliance upon God, fervent zeal, confidence in prayer, unspeakable joy—these and such like blessings are to their timorous souls perilous things which had better be let alone.

The high attainments which some of God's people have possessed of access to the Throne of Grace, of close communion with God, of insight into the secrets of the Lord—those things our dear Brothers and Sisters have thought to be too good for them, too precious for present enjoyment—and they have even suspected that those who profess to enjoy them were likely to have been deceived, or were carried away by carnal excitement! Because they have not yet gathered the grapes of Eshcol, they will not believe that such clusters exist! Because they have not passed this way before, they doubt whether there is, indeed, a highway of holiness undisturbed by ravenous beasts.

This fear of that which is new is more powerful, still, when we are called to enter upon new labors. We become accustomed to our present service, which at first was difficult—continual exercise in it has made it easy to us—and, therefore, when the Lord calls us to something else, we are afraid to venture. We feel as if we were quite competent for the work we are now doing, whereas we ought to know that even there, “our sufficiency is of God,” and we are not able, even in that, to do anything of ourselves. But we are afraid to sail upon seas which we have never navigated before, even though our unerring Pilot steers the ship in that direction! Like Jonah, we would sooner go to Tarshish than bear testimony for God in the streets of Nineveh. And, like the man of God at Horeb, we complain that we stammer and are slow of speech, and we are ready to forego the honor of the Lord's service if we may escape its responsibilities.

Ah, dear Brethren, this is of the flesh! It is altogether contrary to the course of faith! Yet how frequent a temptation it is with the people of God! And, Beloved, when this fear takes the shape of a foreboding of coming trial it is even more common and crushing. We have sometimes to look forward to a period of sickness. Already it may be the disease has commenced to prey upon us—already consumption has weakened our strength by the way. Or a more acutely painful disease is tearing at our vitals, and therefore we naturally expect that month after month our pain will greatly increase and come to an alarming height.

When death appears to be near we persist in imagining that there is something terrible about departure out of this world unto the Father.

Though tens of thousands of Christians have passed away with songs upon their lips, yet we are still afraid to ford the stream—though Jordan's banks have been made to ring ten thousands of times with triumphant shouts—yet still we linger shivering there and think it a dreadful thing to die! Forebodings, then, of pain, decay, and death too often haunt us because we have not passed that way before. To many the fear of poverty is very bitter, they dread the infirmities of old age. They are dismayed in prospect of the desertion of friends, or the loss of beloved relatives in whom their heart is wrapped up.

All these things, because as yet we are new to them, are apt to exercise an influence over our faith of the saddest kind. To help those who are so exercised shall be my aim this morning, hoping that the Lord may have sent by me comfort for His mourners to make the faces of His afflicted to shine. First, we shall utter certain words by way of consolation. Then, others by way of instruction. And, lastly, a few more by way of exciting expectation.

I. First, let us consider thoughts suggestive of CONSOLATION. Let us turn first to the case of the children of Israel. They were certainly where they had never been before. With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, none of them had even passed the Red Sea. They were a fresh generation, born in the wilderness, so that they had not the recollections of the Red Sea as a preparation for their present circumstances.

They saw before them, now, a river which was full to the brim, owing to the melting of the snows of Lebanon. It was both deep and broad—how were they to cross it? They had no apparatus, there was not a boat in all their tents. Suppose they *did* cross it—there was a walled city within view frowning upon them on the other side—and behind the walls were many powerful and ferocious enemies. Suppose they should conquer the men of Jericho—the whole land was full of cities equally strong, “walled up to Heaven” they said, and therefore, apparently impregnable. Their case was one that might naturally excite a thousand fears—but faith drove all fears away.

God sent them His consoling Word at the time when their faith was about to be tried, and, sustained by its power, they did not show the slightest sign of wishing to turn back—they advanced straight on at God's bidding, and the Lord came to their rescue by drying up the river, casting down the walls of Jericho, routing their adversaries, and ultimately giving them the whole of the land from Dan to Beersheba as their inheritance! Now, are you in such a case as that? Are you just now where you have never been before as to trial? Are the demands upon your strength heavier than at any former period of your life?

Is there now a tax upon your faith such as never exercised it before? Come, then, let us talk together, and may the words be words of comfort! Remember, whether your way in Providence is new or old, it is not a way of your own appointing. A higher power than yours has led you to your present place! The people of Israel could have said, “We removed from this place to that, and from that to the next, but we never went without being led on by the fiery cloudy pillar. And here we are just at the brink of

Jordan, but we did not come here in a willful spirit—we were *guided* here—Jehovah Himself went before us!”

Feeling this they felt secure, and we may unite with them. Surely the Lord cannot make mistakes! Eternal Wisdom cannot err! Your path, my dear Brother, and the path of all the saints has ever been directed by the unerring skill of the great Father and therefore it must be right! Providence cannot have placed us in a wrong position—it must be right for us to be just where we are! Yes, though armed men were binding us to cast us into Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace, heated seven times hotter than before, we are in the right place if God has brought us there! He has never erred yet—either in guiding a star in its orbit, or in directing the chaff from the winnowers’ hand—and He cannot err in steering the course of one of His people!

“Say you unto the righteous it shall be well with him,” for, “the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and He delights in his way.” “My times are in Your hands.” Desperate, therefore, though your position may appear to the eye of fear, yet faith knows that God has put you in the best possible position for you to be in at this moment. If it were better, taking everything into account, for you to be in Heaven today than where you are, you would be there! God will do the best possible thing for His people. If it were better for them that there should be no devil and no death, there should be neither devil nor death, but to Heaven should they be caught up at once! Infinite, unspeakable, boundless love arranges all our pathways, and infinite wisdom joins in the decree.

Note, again, your present pathway is new to you, but it is not new to your God. Everything that happens today, or will happen tomorrow is new to us because we can only live in the present moment. And even though we endeavor to project ourselves a little forward, yet it is generally in a wrong fashion, so that we do not see the truth of coming events, seeing not, but only imagining that we see. But *all* things are present to the eye of God. Tomorrow—there is no such thing with Jehovah. Yesterday—there is no such thing! Past, present, future—these are *human* words! “Now” is God’s word, and it comprehends all!

He who should look upon a country from a star, taking a bird’s-eye view, would have all parts equally before him while he who traverses it with a slow step leaves a portion of the territory behind him, and another part is yet before him. So is it with man. Creeping like an insect from leaf to leaf, he leaves something behind, and has something yet before—but God looking down upon all things at once, serenely fills His own eternal “NOW,” and sees our ages pass! The peculiar troubles of today, which are exercising you, dear child of God, your heavenly Father was cognizant of 10,000 years ago! And nothing about them comes upon Him by surprise!

The Lord has no emergencies. He is never at the end of His resources. O Beloved, it makes my heart smile while I mention such a notion! It is a childish folly, indeed, to think that the infinite God who fills all, and sustains all, can ever meet with anything that to Him shall be difficult! Rest, then, O fellow Pilgrim, in this confidence, that the new road to you is an old road to God!

Moreover, there is one view of this thought which ought to be very encouraging to the sorrowful, namely, that He who is at your Father's side, the Man of Love, the Crucified, has, in His practical sympathy with you, actually walked this pathway of yours. That God has *seen* it is consoling, but that Christ has *walked* it is richest comfort!—

***“In every pang that rends the heart
The Man of Sorrows bears His part.”***

You may see all along the way the blood-stained footsteps of Him who gave His feet to the nails. Right down to Jordan's brink, and through the flood and up the far shore there are the marks of the goings of Him who loved the sons of men and bore their sorrows in His own Person for their sakes! Courage, my Brothers and Sisters—where Jesus has been we may go.

He leads us through no darker places than He went through before, and His having gone through them has sown them with light. We thought them novel places of *trial*, but they are no longer so since our Covenant Head has traversed them. Remember, also, the trials which seem new to us are not new to God's people. Joshua said to the tribes, “You have not passed this way before”—but their forefathers had gone through the Red Sea, which was much the same thing—and perhaps on a greater scale still. Do not, therefore, say or imagine that your woes are peculiar. Others have suffered as much as you are enduring. Ask your fathers, the elders of the Christian Church, whether these griefs of yours are new, and they will smile and tell you that they have done business in the same deep waters and that the waves and billows which go over you have also covered their heads. Dream not that a strange thing has happened to you. If it is strange to you it is only to you strange, for the rest of God's saints have suffered the same.

But suppose our position *should* be new, the labor new, the affliction new—it is no sort of reason why it should be any more dangerous. It is folly to be alarmed at new things because they are new. There may be less danger, my dear Brother, after all, in the trial you dread than in that which you are bearing today. You dread poverty, do you? It is an evil, but it may not be such an evil as that which at this present moment bows your spirit down. Care to keep abundance is more gnawing to the heart than the scantiness of penury. Poverty in the experience of God's people has proved to be an evil in the midst of which men are capable of great rejoicing!

You tremble at approaching sickness. But perhaps there will come with the sickness such joy unspeakable to your soul, that the *spiritual* joy will far outweigh the increased bodily infirmity. It is clear, then, that a change is not always for the worse, and altered circumstances do not necessarily involve more burdens. Your trial is new, but not, therefore, the more perilous. Go on, and be not alarmed! And suppose that being new, it *were* dangerous—one thing is very clear, namely, that fear will not diminish the danger! To fret, and worry, and mistrust—will that prepare you for what is coming? Will it help you to lie on the sick bed and be patient if you now begin to fret because you are going to be bed-ridden? Will it aid you to die to begin this day to “feel a thousand deaths in fearing one?”

No, Brothers and Sisters, if the worst comes to the worst, nothing can sharpen your sword so well for battle as faith in the ever-living God. What if I must weep tomorrow? Yet will I sing today, and perhaps my song will gather such force that some of its stanzas will carry over to tomorrow, and I may sweeten my sighs with my Psalms. While we may, let us rejoice in the Lord and not begin to exercise ourselves about unborn troubles.

I saw in the monastery of the monks of La Trappe a few days ago, a grave which they had dug in their garden. Not that any one of them was dead, but it was a profitable and amusing exercise to take a turn at digging the grave of some friend who might die. A happy family, truly, in which the brothers have a grave in readiness for the next who shall depart! I would like to have filled the hole up at once, for surely it is time enough to dig graves when our friends are dead, and even so it is time enough to prepare for troubles when troubles come. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" is the voice of Inspiration. Let us not import from tomorrow the miseries which God has mercifully screened us from today.

Further considerations may also console us. In the past and up to this moment we have found our God to be faithful to us. These present crosses which are now upon our shoulders, we say we would rather always bear them than have new crosses, but is this wise? Do you not remember when these very crosses were, themselves, new? They fit our shoulders now—somehow or other we have adapted our back to the burden, or God has adapted the burden to our back, and we do not like changing the load—though a few years ago we were just as reluctant to bear it! Our present crosses were new once, and God gave us strength to carry them.

Today's grief will only be new for today and for a little time to come. It will soon grow old, if we live long enough, and we shall become as used to the new trial as to the old. As today we have learned to wing our way joyously under the broiling sun of summer, so by-and-by we shall sit upon the bare bough in the desolate winter and cheerfully sing of the coming of spring. Press on, press on, you warriors of the Cross! The new foes shall be as the old. The novelty of sorrow is but of the hour—the hour will wear it out as it wears out itself—and we shall receive strength to bear up under all.

Moreover, beloved Friends, should we become distrustful while passing by a way which we have never trod before if we remembered that progress implies a change of difficulties and trials? Who wants to be like a blind horse going round a mill forever and ever, feeling the lash of the same whip at the same place, and dragging the same machinery round without advancing? No, let us advance! And what if in going on we meet with sterner trials? Then so let it be, for we shall receive richer Grace! Towards the Heaven of God we vehemently desire to make progress by His Grace.

The trials of manhood are not at all the same as those of a child. There are diseases of childhood from which we are quite free when we come to manhood—and there are difficulties and trials both of the body and of the mind which will come upon us in riper years which children know not—yet we are very glad to get out of childhood and into manhood! When a stroke means knighthood no one wishes to avoid it, and if trial brings higher degrees of Grace, who desires to shirk it? Perhaps I would weary

you were I to continue much longer in this strain, but let me remind you that if there come new trials they generally end the old ones.

It is quite certain that if we are troubled with a west wind, if a rough east wind should blow, we shall not be troubled with the west wind any longer. Heat and cold will not both torment us at the same moment. When the children of Israel were in the desert they had one set of trials—there was the hot sand beneath their feet, and the Amalekites pursuing them and attacking them. And, therefore, at any rate whatever there might be in Canaan, they would be out of the desert and away from desert inconveniences. If they had the Gergashites to fight with there would be no Amalekites. So there is something of gain to be set over against any possible loss. Let every child of God remember that.

When the Lord calls us to a change of position and brings out a new burden, He removes the older one. We shall not, tomorrow, be pressed with the weight of today. I do not know what my trials may be seven years from now, but I do know that the trials of the month of June, 1872, will not, then, disturb me. When we bow beneath the infirmities of age, we may rest assured that we shall not be annoyed by the temptations of boyhood, nor molested by the vexations of middle life. In advancing there are prospects of gain as well as of loss.

Moreover, although we have not passed this way before, the path runs in the right direction. The children of Israel had their faces set towards the Promised Land. If they had been called to cross a Jordan which led them into the bondage of Egypt, there would have been something to distress them—but they were traveling to the land of brooks and rivers which flowed with milk and honey! Men of faith among them would say, one to another, “We pitched our tent each night all through the wilderness a day’s march nearer to our rest, and now there is only one more day between us and the land of promise, therefore let us not fear.”

How brave they must have felt when Canaan was just in view. Courage, Brothers and Sisters! The way may be rough to us, but it is the King’s highway, leading to the New Jerusalem—

***“Yet the dear path to Your abode
Lies through this horrid land,
Lord, we would keep the heavenly road,
And run at Your command.
Our souls shall tread the desert through
With undiverted feet,
And faith and flaming zeal subdue
The terrors that we meet.
Our journey is a thorny maze,
But we march upward still.
Forget the troubles of the way,
And reach at Zion’s hill.”***

II. In the second place a few sentences of INSTRUCTION. How shall a man be guided when he comes to a way which he has not passed before? When our way is devoid of familiar footprints, what shall we do? The first instruction is this—be most concerned to hear the Word of the Lord and obey it. Notice that this chapter seems taken up with, “The Lord said unto Joshua,” and, “Joshua said unto the people of Israel.” It must have struck you, in reading it, that it is full of *commands*.

The only details are the taking up of the stones of memorial, heaping them on the shore, and the setting up of other stones in the Jordan—otherwise, all the verses are repeated commands from the Lord, and the record of the nation's obedience to them, from which we may gather that in time of trouble our chief enquiry ought not to be—"How should we get through this?" but, "What is our duty while we are in it?" "How would God have us act under these circumstances?" Depend upon it, there is no temptation more perilous than that of supposing that self-preservation screens us from duty, and that obedience may be suspended while we provide for ourselves.

Remember the words of the hymn—

"Tis mine to obey; 'tis His to provide."

Would you take the Lord's work into your own hands? You cannot do it! Attend to your own. If you were at this very moment in the worst trouble that ever befell a son of Adam, I do not believe wiser advice could be given to you than this—"Trust in the Lord and do good, so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." Be it yours to hear what God, the Lord, shall speak, and to do what He bids you—all will come right, then. The chief point in every dilemma is to wait till you hear the Master's voice.

The next instruction is to distinctly recognize the Presence of the Covenant God of Israel with you. The Ark which went before the people had three-fourths of a mile of distance between it and the people in order that they might see it, because had they been nearer to it the front rank might have seen it, but the rest would not. But now there was a space put between it and the people that they all might see it before them as they went on their march. We never travel so sweetly over the rough ways of this life as when we see that God, the living God, the God of the Covenant, the God of the Mercy Seat, the God of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the God of the reconciliation by blood is with us and fulfilling His promise, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Is God with us? What more do we need? Omniscience, Omnipotence, and infinite Love—are all these leading the van? Then we will not fear to follow, though it were into Hades itself—for if Jehovah led the way His saints would be safe, even there. Treasure that up! Do not think so much of the presence of friends in trouble as the Presence of God in trouble. "Fear not"—what is the next word?—"I am with you: be not dismayed." What is the next sentence? "I am your God." The richest consolation you can have is that which is derived from the Presence of the Lord God of the Covenant!

Note the third instruction. Dismiss from your soul the anxiety which arises from the idea that *you* are the keeper of the Divine life within your soul. "Strange instruction," you say. Yes, but let me explain it. When the children of Israel marched through the wilderness, some tribes were before and some were behind the Ark, as if they were guarding it. But on this occasion the Ark went far ahead of them, as though God had said, "You, My people, are no protection to Me! I guard you." Now in the time of danger the priests who carry the Ark advance into the very teeth of the enemy and into the bed of the Jordan—and there they stand, as though the eternal God threw down the gauntlet to all the hosts of Canaan and

said, "Come and contest it with Me if you can. I have left My people behind. I alone will meet you. I have come up alone, unattended, and I defy you all."

It will often happen that in the time of trouble our worst fear is this—"I am so afraid that I shall not be able to preserve the Grace of God in my heart." Get rid of that, dear Brother, for the right question is not will *you* preserve the Grace of God, but will the Grace of God preserve *you*! Man, be assured of this—God's Grace will take care of him upon whom it lights. There may be a sense in which we are to preserve the Divine life, for there is a watchfulness which each man must render to his own soul—but far higher, and above that, is the truth that the Lord is our Keeper, the Lord is our Shield upon our right hand. The Lord Himself will go before you! He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust! And instead of saying in such a trial, "Shall I be able to keep the Grace I have?" rather say, "I have received the Grace of God, and it will sustain me and make me more than conqueror."

As further instructions let me briefly say, Beloved, if you are now about to enter into a great trouble, do not hurry, make no rash haste. We often, when we are afraid of a thing, dash into it like a moth dazzled by the candle's flame. We become so disturbed in our minds that we do not act wisely and prudently, but fall into that haste which brings no good speed. The children of Israel did not rush pell-mell to Jordan to swim across, but they waited while the priests went on before and tarried till the Ark stood still in the midst of Jordan. Everything was done *deliberately*. Ask Grace to do the same. Be calm. If the Grace of God does not make us calm in the time of peril and suffering, we have some reason to question whether it is healthily operating upon our spirits at all.

But next, while you do not hurry, do not hesitate. Not one man of all the tribes said, "I must wait and see others cross and know whether the road is really open." At the moment the trumpets sounded the advance they all went on, asking no questions. A brave man, that first priest must have been who went right up to the brink of Jordan and put down his foot! It must have been a noble sight to see the water suddenly roll right away in curling waves till it made a great wall of sparkling crystal up towards the right. He was a brave man who stepped there, first, and passed along the novel way which God had newly fashioned! His was the first foot which had trodden the bottom of that ancient river, the river Jordan. Be brave, also, my dear Brothers and Sisters, and go straight on, though it were a river of fire instead of water. If Jehovah bids you, the way is right—hesitate not!

There is one instruction which we must not omit, because it is put by itself for special observance—it is this, "sanctify yourselves." Whenever we are in new trials a voice speaks out of them, saying, "Sanctify yourselves." I suppose the Israelites washed themselves with water and practiced the ceremonial rights which made them clean. So the child of God should come afresh in time of trouble to the precious blood of Christ. He should also ask for Grace that he may purge out the old leaven. Our trials are *not* punishments—for all the punishment of sin was laid on Christ—and God will not punish us for whom Jesus was a Substitute. But they are sent as

paternal chastisements and also as loving hints and indications to us that there is something in us to be put away. What is the voice of your present trial, Beloved? What is the voice of the trial that you are dreading?

I cannot interpret its special note, but I know that its general meaning is this, "Sanctify yourselves." Do we expect, soon, to be laid aside from active service? Then let us work for Jesus while we can! Do we reckon upon a speedy death? Then let us, with both hands, *serve* the Master in the vineyard while life remains in us. May we be more than ever set apart unto God? If we expect poverty or desertion of men, we may feel that the Lord is weaning us from the poor dainties of earth that He may fill us with the ineffable delights of Heaven. "Sanctify yourselves." That is the voice of God to every man who is led by a way which he has not passed before.

III. Lastly, a few sentences by way of exciting EXPECTATION. Before us rolls this river, full to its brim. Beyond the river, contention and strife await us. Let us lift up our hearts to God and trust Him, and what shall then happen? Why, first, we shall discern the Presence of the living God! Did you notice in this chapter how Joshua puts it in the 10th verse? "Hereby shall you know that the living God is among you." The men of this *world* have no living God. They will hardly endure the *name* of God!

They talk of nature, the *forces* of nature, the laws of nature, and so on. They have banished the Lord from their philosophy. I am afraid there are some professing Christians with whom things go so smoothly that they seldom recognize the hand of the living God. Now, O tried Believer, that you are coming into a new trouble, will you know that there is a God, a God who *acts*, a God who interposes for His people and actually works for them! We have not a God who will hear and then refuse to put out His hand to help us—who will look upon us—but will not come to our succor. You might have continued in your present circumstances without discovering what you know now, namely, that the Lord whom you serve will deliver you with a high hand and with an outstretched arm! Anything which gives us an opportunity to see our God is worth having! Even the light of the fiery furnace, if no other light can reveal that Fourth who is like the Son of God, is a precious light! It is worth while treading the blazing coals to have a visit and a sight of that mysterious but beloved Personage! Thank God that trouble is coming, for now, as through a glass, shall you behold the Glory of the Lord!

What next will happen? Why, in all probability the difficulty in your way will cease to be—for while the children of Israel saw the living God, they also saw a totally new and wonderful phenomenon. The Red Sea, it is true, had been dried up, but that generation had not seen it! It was a new thing to them when the river Jordan was made dry for them to march through it. I have seen in my short life some very singular and remarkable things, but I cannot now narrate them. I have often heard persons say, in reading, "Huntington's Bank of Faith," that it was a Bank of Nonsense. I do not believe it. I think there is much in that that any Christian man could have written, and I believe that if many of us were to detail our experiences, they would be quite as wonderful, even though many would say of them, "We cannot believe it, there must be some coloring about it."

The writings of novelists are not one half as interesting as the actual lives of Christians would be if they were written out at length. God does interfere in ways which could not have been prognosticated by those who best understand the science of probabilities. You do not know what is going to happen—a trouble is coming, it will come—but there will come with it a mercy which will swallow it up. “The flood,” you say, “the flood is before me, it overflows its banks.” It is there and yet it is not there, for lo, when you shall come to it, it shall have disappeared—

***“You fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.”***

It has been well up till now. It shall be well to the end. You have not a changing God to deal with—remember that! Shall the God of our childhood, who nursed us when we could not help ourselves, leave us when we come to second childhood? God forbid! Shall He who loved us before the world was leave us when we come into peril? It cannot be! “Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you.” Rest assured of this, that God has resources you have never dreamed of and difficulties shall only put you into a position to see new displays of Jehovah’s power and Grace!

God flings down the challenge every day to Satan and to sin, and says, “Here is My child. I put him in a new position today—see if you can overcome him now.” Tomorrow God will issue the same challenge, and so on to the end. Perhaps this new trouble has come because Satan has said, “Put forth now, Your hand and touch his bone, and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face.” But God is saying, “Try him, try him,” only with this view, that He may get glory by causing our weakness to overcome all the strength of Hell through Divine Grace!

Is this all that we have to expect? No, Beloved, we shall see such deliverances that we shall be prepared for *future* trials. Observe this—Joshua said, “Hereby you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites.” Sometimes a trouble, when we are marvelously brought through it, becomes a kind of stock-in-trade for us. We look back upon it when the next affliction comes and we say, “No, I am not afraid. The God who helped me on that occasion can help me now.” How we may bless God for great afflictions, for now all that are coming will be little troubles in comparison!

He has brought us through the Jordan! Come on, you Hivites! Come on, you Jebusites! Come on, you Gergashites! Behold how God has given you as driven stubble to our bow! He will drive you before us and say, Destroy them, for He who divides the Jordan is a God with whom nothing is impossible! Be glad then, Beloved, if the Lord strangely exercises you. He is trying your muscles and bracing them up for greater feats. As sacred athletes you shall do marvelously in the presence of that crowd of witnesses who compass you about. Rejoice and be glad that thus the Lord prepares you more fully to glorify His name!

Lastly, and this is best of all, and will please the children of God most—all that is coming to you will magnify Jesus in your eyes! On that day when Israel went through the river, God began to magnify Joshua—and oh, when we pass through deep waters of affliction, how the Lord magnifies His Son Jesus in our souls! Jesus is very dear to every child of God, but to the most tried He is the most precious. You who have had Him with you when everyone else has left you know what a dear Friend He is! You who have been nursed by Him when your bones have come through your skin know what a beloved Physician He is!

You who have been succored, and fed, and led and guided by Him when all around has been a wilderness to you know what a good Shepherd He is! And you who have been upon the brink of death and have seen all things melt away know how blessedly He is Immortality and Life, and what a fullness dwells in Him sufficient to fill the soul when all created joys are gone! O Lord God, if it will magnify Jesus, do what You will with Your people! Not one of us would flinch and try to make provision for the flesh if Jesus can be made great! For any other reason less than this we would not say as much—but for Jesus' Glory, for the magnifying of His name—if only You will give us strength we will not dread martyrdom though it is by fire!

Anything for Jesus! Everything for Jesus! Does not your heart say so, my Brothers and Sisters? I know it does if you are loyal to your Savior, and, therefore, today you will shoulder the new cross—you will grasp the fresh weapons of the changed warfare—you will take up the new tools in a fresh corner of the vineyard, though “you have not gone this way before.” If it is for Jesus' honor for us to advance, who desires to loiter? “Forward,” then, is the message of today to all the soldiers of Christ. Great Joshua, lead the way! Amen.

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JOSHUA'S VISION

NO. 795

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 16, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

Portion of Scripture read before Sermon—Joshua 6:10-27.

“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a Man over against him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went unto Him, and said unto Him, Are You for us, or for our adversaries? And He said, No, but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto Him, What says my Lord unto His servant? And the Captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose your shoe from off your foot; for the place whereon you stand is holy. And Joshua did so.”
Joshua 5:13-15.

The Lord divided the Jordan that His people might pass through dryshod. This miracle greatly dispirited the Canaanites, and so prepared the way for an easy triumph for the invading Israelites. You would have naturally expected that the Lord would have bid His people avail themselves immediately of this terror to strike a heavy blow at once, and press on with might and main before the enemy could take a breath and so sweep the land clear of the adversaries in a single campaign.

But it was not so. Instead of immediate activity, the children of Israel pitched their tents at Gilgal and there tarried for a considerable season. For God is in no hurry. His purposes can be accomplished without haste, and though He would have us redeem the time because our days are evil, yet in His eternity He can afford to wait and by His wisdom He so orders His delays that they prove to be far better than our hurries. Why were the people to delay? That they might be obedient to commands which had been forgotten. In the desert, for many reasons, circumcision and the Passover had been neglected. They were not visited with any chastisement on account of this neglect, for the Lord considered their position and condition, and winked at their error. But before He would use them He would have them fully obedient to His will. It cannot be expected that God should tolerate disobedient servants, and therefore they must stay awhile, till they had been attentive to the two great precepts of the Mosaic Covenant.

Dear Friends, let us pause and ask ourselves, as Believers, whether we have been in all respects conscientiously attentive to our Master's commands. If not, we may not expect Him to send a blessing to the Church or to the world through us, until first of all we have yielded our willing obedience to that which He has prescribed for us. Are any of you living in the neglect of a known part of the Divine will? Are you undesirous of knowing some portions of God's will, and therefore willfully blind to them? My dear

Brother, you are cutting the Achilles' tendon of your strength? You can never overthrow your enemies like Samson while your locks are thus shorn. You cannot expect that God should send you forth to conquer and to bring to Him renown when you have not as yet conquered your own personal indolence and disobedience!

He that is unfaithful in that which is least will be unfaithful in that which is greater. If you have not kept the Master's saying in the little vineyard of your personal history, how much less shall you be able to do it if He should entrust you with a greater field of service! Here, then, is the reason for Israel's delay, and it is a reason why at the commencement of our special services [month-long services and Prayer Meetings for conversion of souls] we should make diligent search for neglected duties, and promptly fulfill them. The two precepts which had been overlooked were very suggestive. The one was circumcision. Every man throughout the whole camp of Israel must be circumcised before God would begin to speak about Jericho.

Not a word about the walls falling flat to the ground. Not a syllable concerning compassing the accursed city seven days, until, first of all, the reproach of Egypt had been put away and His people had received the token of the Covenant. We are told in the New Testament that Christians must partake in a circumcision without hands, not of the flesh, but of the spirit. "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly...but he is a Jew which is one inwardly." In the Colossians the Apostle tells us that the true circumcision is the putting away of the body of death by the circumcision of Christ, by which I understand that the Christian must purge himself, in the power of the Spirit and in the name of Christ, of every fleshly defilement, of every sinful thought, of every wrong ambition, of every carnal desire.

If he is to be used by his Master it is imperative that this be done, and be done at once, in the name of the Most High. "Be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." God will not fight His battles by the uncircumcised! He will have His people clean from the sin that does so easily beset them, or else He will not use them. Stop, then, my Brethren, and let me beseech you to search your own hearts and see what there may be within that might render you unfit to be blessed. If I, as God's minister, have no conversions, I dare not attribute the fact to Divine Sovereignty. It may *be* so, but I am always afraid to make Divine Sovereignty the scapegoat for my iniquities. I rather think that if God withholds the blessing, there is a *cause*—and may not the cause be in myself, that I do not live as near to God as I should—or am indulging in something which His holy eyes cannot look upon?

I speak to you who are Church members. If in the Sunday school. If in your tract distribution. Or if in any other work you are doing you do not win souls to God, cry unto Him, "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." Sin blocks up the channel of mercy—the stream is strong enough, but you restrain its flow—your sins separate between you and your God. And, therefore, I beseech each one of you, if you are the Lord's, shake yourselves from the dust, sanctify a fast unto the Most High and come before Him with supplication.

Sit before Him in sackcloth and ashes, in the silent dejection of your abashed spirits, and confess before Him all your sins. Arise, pour out your hearts like water before the Lord! Acknowledge your sins and offenses, and then, being purged from these by the water and the blood which flowed from the riven side of Jesus, you may arise to service and expect to be made a blessing.

But circumcision was not enough, they must also keep the Passover. This, it appears they had only celebrated twice, once in Egypt, and once at the foot of Sinai. But they were now to begin a Passover which was to be kept every year without cessation. Brothers and Sisters, you know the meaning the Passover has to us—it represents feeding upon Christ. He is the Paschal Lamb. We must put away the old leaven of sin and we must come with pure hearts to feed upon our Lord. You will never be able to fight the Canaanites till you have fed on Christ. A spiritual man who tries to live without feeding upon Jesus soon becomes weak. He who has but slight communion with Christ, he who day after day has no sight of the King in His beauty, who is never taken to the banqueting house, and sees not the love banner waving over his head is not likely to be a hero. If you do not eat the bread of Heaven, how can you do the work of Heaven? The farmer that labors must be first partaker of the fruits. And if we would labor for God with success, we must first of all feed upon the Christ of God, and gather strength from Him.

“Son of man,” said the voice from Heaven to the Prophet, “eat this roll.” He must first *eat* it, and then speak concerning what he has handled and tasted. We must enjoy true religion in our own souls before we can be fit exponents of it to others. How shall you be heralds of a message which has never been spoken into your inner ear by the voice of the Lord? How can you expect to bring others to life when your own soul is all but dead? How shall you scatter the live coals of eternal Grace when the flame upon the hearth of your heart has almost expired? Brethren, let us keep the feast! Let us draw near unto our Lord Jesus with pure hearts! Let us renew our first faith and early love, taking the great Son of God to be once more the ground of our hope, the source of our joy, the object of our desires! Let us come near, yes, nearer and nearer still to Him, pressing to His embrace—so shall we be prepared to brave the conflict and earn the victory.

After the ordinances had been kept, you will suppose that at once the trumpet sounded for an assault, and the valiant men of Israel, with their scaling ladders, and their battering rams, gathered round the devoted city to attack and carry it by storm. Patience! Patience! You are always in a hurry, but God is not. Joshua himself, that bold, brave spirit is in some haste, and therefore he goes forth by night, meditating and patrolling. And as he is meditating upon God, and gazing every now and then at that huge city, and wondering where would be the best point of attack, and how it would be captured, he is astonished by the appearance of a stately personage who bears a sword in His hand.

Brave Joshua, unconscious of anything like fear, advances at once to the apparent interloper and demands of Him, “Are you for us, or for our adversaries?” He little guessed in what august Presence he was standing

until a majestic voice said, "No, but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." Then Joshua, discerning the Divinity of the celestial Warrior bowed and worshiped and humbly inquired what he should do. And then after he had been instructed, he rose and went according to the Lord's directions to the capture of the city of palm trees. The children of Israel may be likened to yonder gallant vessel, prepared for a long voyage. All the cargo is on board that is needed. All the stores are there, and every man in his place. In all respects, the good ship is fully equipped, but why does she linger?

Why do not the sailors weigh the anchor? If you ask the man at the helm, he will tell you, "We are waiting for the captain." A good and sufficient reason, indeed, for till the captain has come on board it is idle for the vessel to put out to sea. So here Israel had been circumcised, and the blessed feast of the Paschal Lamb had been celebrated, but still they must not go to the conflict until the Captain Himself had arrived. And here, to Joshua's joy, the Angel of the Presence of the Most High appeared to claim the presidency of the war and lead forth the hosts of God to certain victory!

Brethren, this is precisely the condition of this Church at the present moment! We have endeavored, I think, to draw near unto God and to abide in His love. We have sought to purge ourselves from sin, and to be holy even as He is holy. But still this will not suffice—we need the Divine Presence, and we are now bid to pause awhile and to seek it, prayerfully—that in its matchless power we may go forward successfully.

I. I shall ask your earnest attention, this morning, to two or three brief rules for our present solemn engagements. First, realize the fact of the Divine Presence. Jesus Himself comes to this holy war. Joshua saw a man clad in armor, equipped for war. Cannot the eyes of your faith see the same? There He stands, Jesus, God over all, blessed forever, yet a Man. Most surely God, but with equal certainty bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He is in the midst of His Church. He walks among the golden candlesticks. His promise is, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

I do not wish to talk, but I desire rather that you should exercise your own minds, your faith, your spiritual powers, and vividly believe that Jesus is here—so believe it, that your inner eye beholds what you believe. The Son of Man is here, as surely here as He was with the disciples at the lake when they saw coals of fire, and fish laid on them, and bread! He is here to talk with us by His Spirit as He did to Peter and to the rest of the disciples on that memorable day. Not carnally, but still in real truth, Jesus is where His people meet together.

Joshua saw Him with His sword in His hand. O that Christ might come in our midst with the sword of the Spirit in His hand! Might He come to effect deeds of love but yet deeds of power! That He might come with His two-edged sword to smite our sins, to cut to the heart His adversaries, to slay their unbelief, to lay their iniquities dead before Him! The sword is drawn, not in the scabbard, as alas, it has been so long in many churches, but made bare for present *active* use. It is in His Hand, not in the *minister's* hand, not even in an *angel's* hand, but the sword drawn is

in *His* hand. Oh, what power there is in the Gospel when Jesus holds the hilt! And what gashes it makes into hearts that were hard as stone, when Jesus cuts right and left at the hearts and consciences of men!

Brothers and Sisters, seek this Presence, and seeking it, believe it. And when you hear the Gospel preached, or when you meet together for prayer, think you see in the center of the assembly the Champion of Israel with uplifted sword, prepared to do great exploits, as in days of old. The glorious Man whom Joshua saw, was on his side. The day shall come when the ungodly shall see this Man with his sword drawn. But in answer to *their* question, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" they shall find Him to be the fiercest of their foes!

In the midst of His Church Christ carries a sword only for the purposes of love to it. Oh, how blessed it will be if you can know that out of His mouth there goes a two-edged sword, like unto a flame of fire! And to know that if you dare to bring your heart near to that sword, that it may cut and kill in you everything obnoxious to the Divine will! And then bring your children and kinsfolk and those that sit in these pews side by side with you, and say, "O Master, let Your sword of fire go through them according to Your Word—I kill and make alive, I wound and I heal—O kill, that they may live! O wound, that they may be healed"—

***"Your arrows sharply pierce the heart
Of foemen of the King,
And under Your dominion's rule
The people down do bring.
O you that are the Mighty One,
Your sword gird on Your thigh,
Even with Your glory excellent,
And with Your majesty."***

The Divine Presence, then, is what we desire, and if we have it, Brethren, faith at once is encouraged. It was enough for the army of Cromwell to know that he was there, the ever victorious, the irresistible, to lead on his Ironsides to the fray. Many a time the presence of an old Roman general was equal to another legion—as soon as the cohorts perceived that he was come whose eagle eye watched every motion of the enemy, and whose practiced hand led his battalions upon the most salient points of attack—each man's blood leaped within him and he grasped his sword and rushed forward, secure of success.

My Brethren, our King is in the midst of us, and our faith should be in active exercise. "The shout of a King is in the midst of us," it is said, for where the King is there the people shout for joy and because of confidence of victory. The preacher may preach, but what is that? But if the King is there, then it is preaching in very deed. The congregations may have met, and they may have gone again. "The panoramic view which has dissolved," you say. Ah, so it may seem to *you*, but if the Spirit of God was there, all that as been done will abide, and remain even to that day of judgment, when the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

"Nothing but a simple girl sitting down to talk to a few little children about their souls." Just so, but if the Lord is there, what awe gathers round that spot! If the King Himself sits in that class, what deeds are done that shall make the angels of Heaven sing anew for joy! "Nothing but a humble man, unlettered, earnest, but not eloquent, standing in the corner

of a street addressing a few hundred people. His talk will soon be forgotten." Precisely so, but if the King is there it shall never be forgotten! The footprints of every true servant of the Lord shall not be in the sand, but in the enduring brass—the record of which shall outlast the wreck of matter! When the King is with us, faith is confident because God girds faith as with a golden girdle, and from head to foot clothes her with a panoply of armor and puts a sword into her hand which is all-destroying, and with which she cuts through coats of mail.

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" When the King is with His people, then Hope is greatly encouraged, for says she, "Who can stand against the Lord of Hosts?" There must be conversions! It is no longer a question of trust and expectation, but of *absolute certainty* when Jesus is at the preaching! My Brethren, if by earnest prayer we shall really bring the King into our midst today, as I am persuaded we shall—and if we keep Him here, holding Him by our entreaties, and by our tears, which are the golden chains that bind Christ to His people—then we need not think that there shall be good done, nor hope so, but it *must* be so! It *shall* be so, for where Christ is, there is the manifestation of the Omnipotence of Deity and the hardest of hearts feel its influence!

Where Jesus is, love becomes inflamed, for oh, of all the things in the world that can set the heart burning, there is nothing like the Presence of Jesus! A glimpse of Him will overcome us so that we shall be almost ready to say, "Turn away Your eyes from me, for they have overcome me." Oh, but a smell of the aloes, and the myrrh, and the cassia which drop from His perfumed garments! But a smell of these, I say, and the sick and the faint among us shall grow strong! Oh, but a moment's leaning of the head upon that gracious bosom and a reception of His divine love into our poor cold hearts, and we shall be cold no longer, but shall glow like seraphs, being made equal to every labor, and capable of every suffering! Then shall the Spirit of the Lord be upon us, and our old men shall see visions, and our young men shall dream dreams—and upon the servants and the handmaidens will God pour out His Spirit!

If we do but know that Jesus is here, every power will be developed and every Grace will be strengthened—and we shall cast ourselves into the Lord's battle with heart, and soul, and strength! There is not a single part of our inner man which will not be bettered by the Presence of Christ! Therefore is this to be desired above all things. Brethren, suppose that Christ is here, this morning—His Presence will be most clearly ascertained by those who are most like He is. Joshua was favored with this sight because he alone had eyes that could bear it. I do not read that even Caleb saw this Man with His sword drawn. Only Joshua saw Him, because Joshua was the most spiritual and the most active. If you desire to see Christ you must grow to be like He is, and labor to serve Him with heart, and soul, and strength.

Christ comes not in the visions of the night to those who toss upon the bed of indolence. He reveals Himself in the night watches to those who learn to watch and war. Bring yourselves, by the power of the Spirit, into union with Christ's desires, and motives, and plans of action, and you are likely to see Him. I would that all of you were Joshuas, but if not, if but

some shall perceive Him, we shall still receive a blessing! I am sure this Presence of Christ will be needed by us all. All of you who love Jesus intend to do Him service during this next month, and indeed, I hope as long as you live. Now, there is *nothing* good which you can do without Christ. "Without Me you can do nothing," is a great and undoubted fact. If you meet to pray, you shall not pray acceptably unless He is with you. If you teach, or preach, or whatever you do, however small the labor, you shall accomplish nothing unless it is through His power, and through His manifested Presence with you. Go not to warfare at your own charges but wait upon your Master, tarrying at Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.

But, Brethren, Jesus Christ's Presence may be had. Do not despond and say that in the olden times the Master revealed Himself but He will not do so now. He will, He will, He will! His promise is as good as ever. He delights to be with us even as with our fathers. If He does not come it is because we hinder Him—we are not straitened in Him, but straitened in our own heart. Let me persuade you that all the great things which were done at Pentecost can be done again, in this Tabernacle! Let me persuade you that all the wondrous conversions which were worked in any of the ages of the Church may be repeated at this hour! Do not say that Luther, or Calvin, or Whitfield, or Wesley were great men and therefore around them great things gathered!

My brethren, the weakest of men may be more honored than the greatest, if God so wills it. Our weakness, lack of learning, lack of eloquence, and what not—I look upon these as *advantages* rather than not—for if we were eminent, we might, perhaps, claim some of the glory. But if we are "less than nothing and vanity," then is there a clear stage for the Divine operations! And why should we not so see in this place such a revival as shall shake all England and stir the dry bones in the Valley of Vision at this day as they never were stirred since Apostolic times? We have but to *expect* it, to *believe* it, to *pray* for it, to *work* for it, and we shall *have* it!

God's clouds still pour down the water floods as plenteously as when Elisha went up to the top of Carmel. The Lord thunders mightily against His enemies at this day, as when He went forth with His people in the days of yore. Think not that the Almighty has ceased to do marvels—the Lord of Hosts is still the King eternal, immortal, and invisible—with an arm which does wonders. You have still only to plead the power of the precious blood and the meritorious death of Christ to see wonders in this year of Divine Grace which shall even eclipse any that your fathers saw, or heard of in the old time before them!

May God grant to each Believer among us the vision of the God-like Man with the sword drawn in His hand, and then may *we* go forth in the strength which He alone confers.

II. In the second place, understand the Lord's position in the midst of His people. "As Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." What a relief this must have been for Joshua. Perhaps he thought *himself* the captain—but now the responsibility was taken from him—he was to be the *lieutenant*, but the King Himself would marshal His hosts! I feel it no small relief to my own mind to feel that though I have been at your head these

14 years, leading you on in God's name to Christian service, yet I am *not* your Captain, but there is a greater One, the Presence Angel of the Most High, the Lord Jesus—He is in our midst as Commander-in-Chief.

Though my responsibilities are heavy, yet the leadership is not with *me*. He is a leader and commander for the people. Brothers and Sisters, wherever Christ is, we must remember that He is Commander-in-Chief to us all. We must never tolerate in the Church any great man to domineer over us. We must have no one to be Lord and Master except Jesus. Christ is the Field-Marshal, the Captain of our salvation! And if you are a member of the Church of God, you must admit this, not as a general fact only, but as a fact *particularly* in your case. Christ is your Master. You are not to say, "I prefer this or that doctrine." What have you to do with likes or dislikes? Believe what He tells you. You are not to say, "I prefer a certain form of worship." What have you to do with preferences? Worship as the Master bids you.

Alas, for the day when whims and tastes and fancies come into the Christian Church to lead the people. All this Puseyism which we hear so much outcry about is simply the putting up of taste into the place of simple *obedience* to Christ. If we would but just keep close to Christ's Word we should be right enough. I pray each Believer here to remember that he is in no respect his own master in the things of God, but that Christ is Commander-in-Chief. "Is it of any use to send missionaries to India?" said someone to the Duke of Wellington. "What are your marching orders?" said the Duke. "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

Those are our marching orders. We have nothing to do with whether they are prudent orders or not. They are sure to be good if they come from Him! Our duty is to do as our Commander bids us to do. Every word of Christ, if we would see Him do wonders in our midst, must be obeyed! Not the great precepts only, but the little ones, too. It behooves Christians to have done with that cant about non-essentials. My Brethren, every command of Christ is essential to us as servants! Not essential to our salvation—we are saved—that is not the question for us to raise. But being saved, and being servants of Christ, every command which comes from the great Captain is essential for every soldier to keep. It matters not though it is simply a ceremony, yet still we have no right to alter it.

What would the court-martial say to any of the private soldiers, who, having received an order from a captain, should say, "Well, I did not consider it to be exceedingly important?" "Drum him out of the regiment, Sir, there is an end to all discipline in the army when soldiers criticize their orders." So is it with Christ's Law. We have no right to say, for instance about Believers' baptism, "Well, it is a non-essential." Who told you so? If Jesus commands it, obey it! And if it is the Lord's Law, make haste and delay not to keep the Master's statute. I single out that one precept, but there are many others which are, perhaps, of greater importance, if we are allowed to say greater or less about anything which Christ has bid us do.

My Brothers and Sisters, let us seek, now, to put our minds into the hands of the Holy Spirit to be taught what the great Captain's will is. And when we know it, let our souls bend under it, as the willow bends in the

breath of the wind, and as the boat upon the sea is driven to and fro in the gale. Down with you, Self, down with you! Carnal judgment and foolish reason, lie still! Let the Word of God be paramount within the soul, all opposition being hushed! Brethren, if we do not act with the Captain, disappointment will be sure to follow. The Lord had issued orders that none of the tribes should take of the accursed spoil of Jericho. Achan did so. I have often wondered that only Achan did it, but that *one* Achan brought defeat upon Israel at the gates of Ai.

I wonder how many Achans there are here this morning. I should feel myself very much at ease if I thought there were only one, but I am afraid that there are many who have the accursed thing hidden within them—the love of money, or wrong ways of doing business, or unforgiving tempers—or an envious spirit towards their fellow Christians. Now, if the possession of these bad things by one will stop the blessing, we are in a very evil plight—but he is in a worse plight, by far, who is the occasion of the evil. Where are you, Achan? God will find you out even if we do not! He will bring us all by our tribes, by our families, by our households, and then man by man—and woe unto the son of Carmi if he is taken! Brethren, the violation of the Law of the Captain may bring defeat upon the whole company. And where the law is not obstinately and willfully violated, yet its neglect will cause much trouble.

They were commanded to make no covenant with the Canaanites, but in a thoughtless hour, the Gibeonites came like persons from a far country. The Israelites believed their deceitful story and made a covenant with them—and this became a trouble to Israel long afterwards. If as a Church we forget the Law of Christ, even though we do not contemptuously break it, if we ignorantly forget it we may expect no small amount of evil to flow from it. Do not tolerate the idea that God punishes His people for sin in the sense of punitive justice. But always hold it for certain that the Lord *chastises* His people for sin as a father chastises his children, and that the great Head of the Church will not suffer His Laws to be broken with impunity by His own people.

I wish I could speak to you with the earnestness which I feel boiling up within my soul. I would, my Brothers and Sisters, that we should keep our Master's commands in every jot and tittle, depending upon His Presence, feeling Him to be here, not daring in His Presence to offend, but yielding up to Him the reins of government in all respects that we might then have His blessing. I want that we should all keep to the Word of God, minding each precept as far as we understand it. I want, moreover, that we should be attentive to that mind of Christ which is often expressed by the Holy Spirit in Divine monitions in our minds, that the Law of the Book may be with us, and the Law of the Spirit within us. If we are obedient to both these, we shall be prepared, like Joshua, to advance to the war.

III. Thirdly, and very briefly. Our third rule is worship Him who is present with us. Joshua, it is said, fell on his face to the earth. Worship is the highest elevation of the spirit, and yet the lowliest prostration of the soul. If Christ is here, Brothers and Sisters, when you reach your homes get a little time of quiet and worship. And when you come up again, this evening—in your songs and prayers truly worship the ever present God—

bow down in the lowliest reverence of your subdued spirit as though you were actually in Heaven.

If you have no wings with which to veil your face, still cover it with shame. If you have no crown to cast, yet such talent as you have, lay it all down *reverentially* before Him. Worship the Son of God! Then, when you have so done, give up yourself to His command. Say to Him, "What says my Lord unto His servant?" I wish you could spend this afternoon, those of you who are not actively engaged, in trying to get an answer to this question: "What says my Lord unto His servant? What is there for me to learn, for me to feel, for me to do? And as I would help my Brethren during this month, Lord, what part of the work am I to take?"

When you have done this, dear Friends, I want you to imitate Joshua in the third things, namely, take off your shoes from your feet. Joshua, perhaps, had not felt what a solemn thing it was to fight for God, to fight as God's executioner against condemned men. Therefore he must take his shoes off. We never can expect a blessing if we go about God's work flip-pantly. I shudder when I see any sitting at the Lord's Table who can indulge in light remarks or in wandering thoughts on so solemn an occasion. What have you to do here, not having on a wedding garment? There are some of us whose besetting sin is levity of spirit. Cheerfulness we are to cultivate, but we must beware lest levity become a cankerworm to our Graces.

Brethren, this next month must be a holy month unto us. I ask our young and our old friends, alike, to seek a quiet and sober spirit. To seek to save souls from going down to the pit is no pastime. To talk of Jesus is no trifle. We do not meet to pray in sport. We do not gather together in supplication as a mere matter of form. Angels are in our midst observing us. The King Himself is here! How would you behave if you actually saw Jesus with your eyes? If I were to vacate this pulpit and the Crucified One stood here, stretching out His pierced hands and looking down upon you with the mild radiance of His sovereign love—how would you feel?

Ask to feel just so, for He *is* here. Faith can perceive Him. Ask to feel just so at this present moment, and so to go out to your work this afternoon and all the remaining days of your life, as a servant of God who is standing in the Presence of his Lord upon holy ground, and cannot, therefore, afford to trifle since he has solemn work to do and means to do it in his Master's name.

IV. To conclude, let us now, even before we separate, advance to action according to the Master's command. Unconverted men and women, you are in our Jericho—we wish to conquer you for Christ. Our desire is to win you to Jesus for your own good and for His glory. Now, what are we to do with you? Joshua was bid to go round the city seven times. We would preach to you the Gospel of Christ, not seven times, but 70 times seven. They were to blow the rams' horns. The rams' horn was most mean as to matter, most dull as to sound and the least showy as to appearance. So, we say with the rough sound of our ram's horn that unless you repent, you must perish!

Sin must be punished. Sin is upon you, and God must punish you. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of His Law can

fail, and this is one part of His Law, "The soul that sins, it shall die." You have sinned, you are always sinning, and die you must. Some of you are going from bad to worse. If you do not live in outward sin, yet the sins of thought and heart will condemn you. You will die before long and when you die the Lord will cast you into the place which He has prepared for the devil and his angels. Be not deceived, there may be but a step between you and death—or if your life is prolonged for a little season, yet how soon will it be over.

Eternity! Eternity! How dread to you if you plunge into it unprepared, to face an angry Judge—no righteousness of Christ to plead, and no blood in which to wash your guilty soul! You are standing, some of you, between the jaws of perdition. The Gospel has been preached to you and you have neglected it. You have been brought up by godly parents and you have despised their admonitions. Therefore wrath will come upon you to the uttermost. As sure as you live you shall be driven from Jehovah's Presence into the place where hope cannot follow you and where mercy will never seek you.

We *must* sound this ram's horn! We only pray that God may bless our warning voice to you. After the rams' horns came the ark, which the priests carried round and round the city. That ark was the type of Christ. We beg to bring Christ before you, you unconverted ones. Jesus Christ came into this world to seek and to save that which was lost. God smote Him instead of us. He took the sins of His people and God punished Him for our sins instead of punishing us. Christ is the great Substitute for sin. If you trust Him you shall live. If you will take Him this day to be your Savior, and to be your Master and your Lord, you shall never perish, for God has pledged His word for it, that if you believe in Him you shall be saved.

O that you would look to Christ, and live! Your good works are nothing, your tears and prayers all go for nothing as to merit, but if you look to Jesus hanging from yonder Cross, you shall live! If you will trust yourself with Him who is now at the right hand of the eternal Father, crowned with many crowns, sooner shall Heaven's high throne be shaken than your soul be suffered to perish! Only believe in Jesus, and you shall live, for this is the Gospel, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned." We seek not to mince matters with you—damned you *will* be unless you trust Christ! Damned you *never* shall be if you will come and cast yourself before Him. "Kiss the Son lest He be angry, and you perish by the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

Suppose that in the visions of the night, this night, when you are on your bed you should suddenly see in your chamber the Man with a sword drawn in His hand! You would not need to ask the question, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?" for your own conscience would soon tell you. Suppose you should hear a solemn voice declare, "The harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and you are not saved." "Because I have called and you refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded...I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes." Suppose you saw that sword uplifted and about to strike you? Would you not start in your dream, and your face be covered with a clammy sweat, feel-

ing horrors indescribable? Yet such is your case today and unless you repent such will be your case eternally.

I bless God that now our Lord Jesus has no sword drawn in His hand, but He comes to you with open hands, and says, "Come unto Me all you that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." With tears He invites you to come to Him, persuades you to come. O why do you tarry? Why do you turn your backs upon your own mercy, and seal your own death warrant? God grant that you may come to Jesus, and before He grasps that sharp destroying sword.

Lastly, Brethren, we are not only to sound the ram's horn of warning, and to bear round and round the sinner's conscience the ark of Christ's Grace, but *all* the host must engage in the work. Did you notice that the whole of the people were to compass the city! It would not fall otherwise. And they were to shout, too, at the last. I want you, my fellow members, to unite in our earnest efforts to win souls for Christ. I have a right to claim it, and now I entreat you to fulfill the claim. You profess to have been bought with the Lord's blood, and to be His disciples. I ask you all, if you are sincere in your professions, come with us round about this Jericho, every one of you!

If you cannot all come up to the public Prayer Meetings, yet send us your hearts—pray for sinners, plead for the unconverted—give the eternal Leader no rest till He is pleased to use His great power for their conversion! I am almost inclined to fall on my knees to ask you Church members to rally round us at this hour. If you owe your conversion to me, under God, as many of you do, I charge you by every filial tie you feel, desert me not just now! If you have ever been comforted, as I know some of you have. If I have ever been God's voice to your souls, I beseech you return to me this kindness by drawing very near to God in prayer for the souls of others!

For your own children's souls be very earnest. For the souls of your servants, and kinsfolk, and neighbors, wrestle with God even unto tears! And if you will not do it, I had almost said I had sooner you were not with us. If you will not pray—if you will not join in the common supplication—why do you cumber us? O Meroz, take care lest you be accused if you come not up to the help of the Lord—to the help of the Lord against the mighty! But you *will* come. God will be with us, and show us His bare right hand resplendent in our midst, and unto Him shall be the praise forever and ever. Amen.

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JERICHO CAPTURED

NO. 629

**PREACHED AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
ON BEHALF OF THE BAPTIST IRISH SOCIETY.**

*“And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into your hands Jericho and the king thereof and the mighty men of valor. And you shall compass the city, all you men of war and go round about the city once. Thus shall you do six days.”
Joshua 6:2, 3.*

I SEE many ministering Brothers here. I think I shall follow the example of Martin Luther who observes that he frequently saw in the church at Wittenberg sundry learned doctors and there usually sat Dr. Justus Jonas and others of whom he said were infinitely greater and more wise than himself. “But,” said Martin, “I do not, therefore, alter my style of preaching—I do not preach to them—I preach to those peasants who come in from the country and to the citizens of Wittenberg. For then I am quite certain that if they can understand me, Dr. Justus Jonas and the learned divines can understand me, too, if they like.”

I shall, moreover, adopt what is said to have been Mr. Wesley’s exhortation to his preachers, namely, aim low. “There is more likelihood,” he says, “of hitting the men than when you fire high.” I may also frankly confess I am reduced to that precept by necessity since I have no capabilities of firing high and must therefore shoot low. We shall take our text now and try, if we can, to get something out of it which may be applicable to the present position of our Society and see if we cannot draw some words and thoughts from it which may strengthen, encourage and nerve us for future action in this good work of God.

The Irish Society has to do with one of the citadels of Romanism and it strikes me that there is a very evident parallel between our efforts and the work which Israel had to do against this city of Jericho. Jericho was a strongly defended city and shut up so that none went in or came out. And Romanism seems to have accomplished this admirably. It shuts up its disciples so that they are scarcely accessible and converts from it are few and far between. None, I was about to say, go in—very few, indeed, from us—and there are very few who ever come out again.

Jericho was the frontier city. That being captured, the conquest of the rest of Canaan would be comparatively easy. And Popery is very much the frontier city, the Jericho of our warfare—it stands in the way of the evangelization of the world—it is the great impediment to the spread of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let Jericho fall and Canaan may weep and howl, for her day has come. And let Rome be subdued—let Romanism be conquered—and the world shall soon be at the feet of that Jesus whom it once despised.

We are attacking, I think, in the Irish Society, a Jericho, indeed, and we have been long at it. But it has been a very weary task and the Brethren have sometimes been apt to cry, "Let it be given up." I will speak of this on the first, the second, the third, the fourth, the fifth—perhaps on the sixth day of the week, to cry to these Brethren—"Courage, go on still with your rams' horns! Bear your testimony and carry the Ark of the Lord round about this city, for the Lord has delivered it unto your hands. Only be obedient and courageous and abide His time, for your victory is absolutely sure."

I shall divide what I may have to say this evening into these three parts. It strikes me that the narrative before us teaches us that God would have His people work and wait and win. And this is what we have to do today as they had of old.

I. First of all God would have His people WORK. A little upon that. We preach the Doctrines of Grace, and the Doctrines of Grace are always the best soil in which to grow good works. We daily insist upon it that works do not make a man live, but we equally insist upon it that spiritual life continually manifests itself by holy deeds. The soldiers of God's army, after they had crossed the Jordan, were not to lie still in luxurious ease till Jericho's walls should crumble down by slow degrees. And though God determined to send Jericho to sudden destruction, yet His people were not to sit still upon some neighboring knoll and expect the catastrophe—they were to labor and Jericho would fall as the result of their toil.

Their work is to consist of a daily procession. They are to go in cavalcade round about the wall. The priests are to exercise their functions. The ark must be carried upon men's shoulders. The men of war are to be there to defend the ark, to clear the way, and to follow, also in the rear to guard it against any sudden attack or any eruption from the city. They are to march thus the whole of the six days—not one day without its parade—not one day without obedience to the great Captain of the host.

So, Brethren, must it be with us. We are to win the world for Christ! This is our high ambition and it shall be in Christ's name our grand attainment. But it must be by work, by testimony-bearing, by the preaching of the Gospel, by continual prayer, by encompassing the city, perpetually serving God and walking in the path of obedience. Let us look at this work a little in connection with this narrative. You will observe that the work to be done by Israel was universal. There was a place for each one to occupy. The men of arms were to go round the city, and with them the priests were to march.

Both the ecclesiastical and the military castes shall be represented here. They must neither of them sit still. It is an ill day for God's Church when we conceive that some few are to fight the Lord's battles and that the rest of us may look on and criticize or applaud. You are, all of you, my Brethren, called to serve God. You recognize this in your creed. You know yourselves to be priests and you hate the lie which lifts some men into a priesthood and puts the rest down as, "the laity," as though they were nothing better than stones. You feel that you are all called to bear the vessels of the Lord—that you are a "royal priesthood, a peculiar people."

You know that you are all set apart for the service of God. But while this is our creed, I am afraid it is not our practice. How many take their seats in the pew, and when they have once made themselves comfortable consider that their work is entirely wrapped up in listening to sermons or perhaps fumbling in their pockets for a solitary coin on collection occasions for the Missionary Society? It may be now and then—now and then—assisting in some enterprise of usefulness, but this only as an exception to the rule.

We shall never see the Church become strong and mighty till every single member of the Church shall realize his responsibility. We must all encompass this city. Observe, when the Lord fed the multitude He did not take *some* of the five loaves, or *one* of the fishes, but He took all the loaves, though they were barley and both the fishes, though they were small. And He took care to break all and to divide all among the people. Nothing of a stock-in-hand was kept in the larder, nothing was laid by—all was used.

And then, by the multiplying power of God, there was sufficient food for all. And so we must rummage the larder, we must bring out the barley cakes, we must bring forth the fishes—all must be devoted to the Master's cause. And, in the use, ability will be multiplied! And in the exercise, Divine Grace will be increased and we shall yet be sufficient for the world's needs.

It has been said, and I think a little calculation will show you that it is correct, that if God were to enable the Christians in this huge city of ours to feel their responsibility and if every individual Christian were made the means of the conversion of one other—starting with fifty thousand Christians in London, (and let us hope there are as many Believers as that—for it is a very small proportion of the professing multitude)—then, considering that there are three million souls in London, six years would be sufficient for the conversion of the whole by the simple agency of each disciple bringing in one of the stray sheep.

This does not seem as if it were an impossible thing. Only Divine Grace is wanted from on high. We must plead with God to bring down the blessing. And when the blessing comes on each man's labor, there certainly is no hindrance in the matter of time, or in the matter of exertion—for, with God's blessing—the conversion of a soul is not a matter that requires us to relinquish business, or that compels us to give up all our time to it. Some five minutes have been, by Divine Grace, a sufficient length of time and half-a-dozen words have proven enough. Courage, my Brethren! Vast as the work is, if we all go to it, with God's blessing it will be speedily accomplished.

Our police served us all with a notice the other day, when the snow was on the ground, that we were each one to sweep before our own doors. It was very right that the passenger should go along the footpath without being smothered with the mud and snow commingled. Now what an expense it would have been to clean the streets of London by any other process! It would be difficult for a contractor to undertake it by the year, since he would scarcely know how often he would be called to work. How could an army of men be kept ready to do the work which comes in so

strange a fashion—sometimes but once in the year and sometimes fifty times?

But each man sweeps before his own door and then it is all done early in the morning and you walk the streets in comfort! Oh that we could but feel that we are to sweep before our own door! Oh that every man would build the dilapidated wall of Jerusalem before his own house! And when this is done, then shall God send victory to His hosts. But I fear it will not be till then. God would have His people work universally.

But next, He would have them work in His own appointed way. They are not to go in a scramble—in a boyish race—round Jerusalem. There must be the soldiers in their troops, the priests in their array and then again, the men of war to bring up the rear. God would have His people work according to His revealed will. We must be very tender and jealous here. Whatever may be the opinions about the alteration of the constitution of our Missions, I do trust that we shall, all of us, when we come together, recognize the authority of God and feel that we can only expect to have His guidance, His help, His blessing, when we walk according to the path which He has marked for us.

If I go upon a tour I do not expect to see certain sights which have been guaranteed to me by my friend unless I agree to follow the little chart which he has mapped out for me. I cannot expect to have that sublime view of the Alps if I refuse to climb a certain spot and stand there and view the glacier and the snow peak glittering in the sun. And I cannot expect to have God's blessing in my ministry and in the Sunday school class unless I keep to, "It is written," and in all things have a tender conscience and am jealous of myself lest I err.

How much more, then, in this greater work in which the whole Church is engaged! My Brothers and Sisters, let us see to it that in all things we compass this city of Jericho according to the Divine order! For only so may we expect to see her walls come crumbling down. Then, again, remember they encompassed the city *daily*. So does God call His Church to work daily. It is very easy for us, in a moment of excitement, to accomplish a great work. And the most of Christian work now-a-days is, I fear, merely spasmodic. We build chapels by a series of fits. We pay off missionary society debts by stupendous efforts and we relapse again into debt and difficulties.

I am afraid that as a denomination we are not fond of working too tryingly. We know the value of ourselves, of our time and of our money and we are not apt to wear ourselves out by any excessive exertion. We have never, I believe, at any period since the unhappy days of Munster, been accused of an excess of zeal! We are rather to be accused of quarreling about points on which we differ than of excessive love of sticking to the practical business of fighting the devil and winning the world to Christ. But we must come to this, for mark you, if we are to conquer the world we must each of us have our daily work and keep to it as God shall give us Grace.

The wheel must revolve again and again and again—it is that perpetual motion of industry which produces wealth and it must be the ceaseless energy of our zeal which shall produce spiritual conquest. We have sharp-

ened our swords and fleshed them well. The younger men among us have had a brush with the foe and we are beginning to think, like our sober sires, we may be quiet. But it must not be so—we must agitate for all the Truth of God, for all the doctrines we hold dear and for the peculiar Truths of God we hold as a denomination. We must keep on fighting for Christ and fighting for Christ every day.

We must sleep in our armor! We must begin to feel that the sword cleaves to our hand and cannot be separated from it. We must give ourselves so entirely to the work to which God has called us that wherever we are, whatever we may be engaged in, men may take knowledge of us as to what is our work and calling. In this Irish Society there must be no standing still, no ceasing of the trumpet, no withdrawing of so much as a single ram's horn. The testimony must still be kept up, the witness-bearing must become more constant. We must preach and teach and pray and work and live and, if necessary, die daily until this Jericho is stormed.

Nor have we exhausted the metaphors with which our text supplies us, for surely we may add that God would have His people work in *faith*. We are told by Paul that, "by *faith* the walls of Jericho fell down." It seems to me that was a grand spectacle when the first man went forward step by step, and all the rest followed, the priests too, all of them confident that they were doing the best thing to make Jericho's ramparts fall to the ground. "Why," the fool might have said, "you are doing *nothing*. You are not loosening a single stone!" And at the end of the fifth or sixth day, I suppose it was suggested by many, "What is the good of it all?"

But at least the most of those who encompassed the city were men of faith—or else it could not have been said, "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down." "Yes," they seemed to say, "she will come down! She will come down! She stands like a rock. She has not moved. There is not a beam loosed, nor a cord broken—not a house in ruins, nor a tent that has fallen—not a single stone that has crumbled from her battlements. But she *shall* come down!" And on they went with steady tramp—and though they saw no corpses blocking up their pathway and though their arms were not red with blood. Though they heard no shriek of those that flee and could utter no shout of victory—yet they were as confident as they were when the walls actually began to rock and the dust and smoke went up to Heaven—and the shrieks of the slain made glad their ears.

We must encompass this city in full faith. Brethren, is the preaching of the Gospel a power? If you think it is not, never try it again. Is the Gospel mighty to save? Will the Gospel come out victorious? If you have any doubt, slink back to your cowardly repose and let the man whom God sends never doubt. If you have achieved no successes, if after fifty years your trumpet of jubilee is exceedingly small. If after fifty years it is something like a ram's horn that has not been bored and can not make any noise at all, yet still go on! Your time for shouting has not yet come, but your time for compassing the city is always present. Get on with it! Get on with it and God will not permit you to end till you have won the victory!

So let us notice once more under this head of work—they worked with patience and courage. God kept this people laboring in the presence of difficulty. They were compassing the city, taking their walks, but always with

the formidable walls of Jericho close under their eyes. Surely they must have had these walls photographed on their eyes and on their brains. "I shall know every stone in it," says one. "Six times I have been round, no, twelve times and the walls have not begun to rock—twelve times! Seven is a perfect number, but we have gone beyond it and yet the walls do not stir." "Mark well her bulwarks and count the towers on her."

These men were practical surveyors of Jericho. They could well understand the strength of the battlements, how many feet long the huge stones were at the corners and how near the stars the loftiest towers were raised. They had the difficulty, I say, always before them! Yet they kept on in simple faith, going round the city. Sometimes we get into the habit of shutting our eyes to difficulty. That will not do—faith is not a fool! Faith does not shut her eyes to difficulty and then run headlong against a brick wall—never!

Faith sees the difficulty, surveys it all and then she says, "By my God will I leap over a wall." And over the wall she goes. She never brings out the flaming accounts of, "signs of the times," in her favor. She does not sit down and say that evidently public sentiment is changing. She does not reckon upon any undercurrents that may be at work which she is told by Mistress Gossip really are doing great things. Faith just looks at it and does not mind how bad the thing is reported to be. If anybody can exaggerate the difficulty, Faith is of the same noble mind as that famous warrior who, when told there were so many thousand soldiers against him, replied, "There are so many more to be killed."

Faith reckons—"So many more difficulties, so many more things to be overcome." And even impossibilities she puts down as only so much burden to be cast upon Him with whom nothing is impossible! She keeps Jericho's walls before her. And I would that we, dear Friends, knew more than we do—the perfect hopelessness of our work of seeking to convert Ireland to the Gospel—for there never was a task undertaken, I think, that had less hopefulness about it! I want you to be driven more and more to think, as far as the agency of man is concerned, that the thing is almost out of the category of the *possible* and out of the category of the *probable* altogether!

And when you can get to that point and hear the voice, "Compass the city seven days," yet still have courage to go on, on, on—notwithstanding all the manifest difficulties—then when God has taught you your nothingness and brought you to feel that if victory is given it is all His and that Divine Omnipotence and Sovereignty must wear the crown—then, I say, He will make the old rampart rock! And the harlot of the seven hills shall rue the day when Israel shouts, when her sons are slain and God shall triumph right gloriously! God, however, would have His people work—that is the first point—we are agreed on that. Let us unite to carry it out.

"The sermon is not done" said one, when he came out of Church—"it is all said, but it is not all done." So let me close this head with saying that it is not done, it is only said. I have said that God would have His people work. Let us go and work. Let us begin tonight. If we have been lazy up to now—if there are any Issachars here like the strong ass crouching down between two burdens—just get up, Sir Issachar, and carry your burden! If

there is any Brother here that has been saying, "God will have His own," let him mind what he is doing, or God will never have *him*, for God's own do not talk at that rate and do not say that God's purposes are to be an excuse for man's *indifference*.

Let him shake that off, for he cannot take such a plea as that before the judgment bar. He knows he cannot. Therefore do not let him try it here. Let us try and work well for God. You in your Sunday school classes, you in your preaching stations, you in your tract distributions, you here in England. You, my Brethren, across the sea and you in the Emerald Isle still compassing the city seven times.

II. We now come, in the second place, to consider that God would have His people WAIT. The delay must have sorely tried the faith and patience of the Israelites. "Time flies," and time is very precious. These Israelites must have thought, "Why make us wait? If we have to tarry a long while before the walls of Jericho, why then, what a time it will take to conquer all the interior. And if we begin with a long delay, our enemies may gather courage and before we have made our entrenchments behind which we may shield ourselves, the host will be upon us and we shall be cut to pieces."

It must have seemed to every merely thoughtful person in the camp of Israel that it was imperative that the first city should be taken as speedily as possible so that the people might be encouraged and their enemies scattered. And it would give to those weary pilgrims some settled place to which they might retire with comfort, for they were, I suppose, still in their tents and longing for the time when, like the rest of the people of the land, they might dwell in their own houses.

But they must keep quiet. And, according to present appearances, they must remain so indefinitely. The people could not tell how long they were to tarry there. And just observe, my Brethren, how very trying it must have been to them to wait. I do not know so much about the priests, for I am afraid priests are apt to be very contented with doing nothing, but not so with soldiers! There are a great many Brethren who seem to be perfectly satisfied to rest at ease. But men of war do not generally seem to be of that temperament.

When I was in the military prison at Dublin I observed a form of punishment there. Men were carrying large shot. A man took up a large shot and carried it to the end of the yard and he afterwards had to pick that shot up and bring it back again. I said, "How is it that you do not let them take all the shot to that end and pile them up there?" The officer said, "We used to do so but it was no use, for when the fellows had piled them up they felt they were doing something. But now we make them carry the shot from one end of the yard to the other and then back again and back again and they feel they have to work hard and do nothing. That is always miserable work to a soldier."

Many of our soldiers at Sebastopol made bitter complaints at not being led to battle. And you will often hear young military men say that they hate the inactivity of peace—they want to be doing something. Now these men of war were kept for six days marching round and round the city and they must have felt themselves to have been doing very little all that week.

That is what I feel with regard to this Irish Society and there are many of us, too, who, if we speak plainly, must say that we think that we have done very little, sorry little.

We remember two or three things that have been successes. And two or three things that have been a very long way from success. Sometimes we have complained that there have been asylums provided for Brethren sent yonder and we have wondered why such Brethren were sent at all. We have said, "Well, if this do-nothing affair is to keep on much longer, we must get others who will do something—for at present we are in this position—'What is John doing?' 'Nothing.' 'What is Tom doing?' 'Helping John.'" We want to see something done and therefore it is hard to wait. but we must check ourselves. Our vehemence should urge us to use all proper means, though it should never be of that sort which would make us relax our efforts because we do not immediately achieve all the success which we desire.

My Brethren in Christ Jesus, though as men of war we would rather come to close quarters and see more done, yet as men of God we must keep to our posts of duty and learn how to wait. Besides this, what rendered the waiting so very galling was, (what must have struck their reason, if it did not assail their faith), the utter desperateness of the case. How could they hope to win that city by simply going round and round? "Give me a good ladder," says one, "a rope ladder, and a couple of good irons at the end of it! Just let me hear the clank upon the top stone and I am your man to lead the 'forlorn hope!' And there are fifty thousand of us to follow and we will soon have Judah's standard waving on the top and make the sons of Jericho know what the sons of Abraham can do."

But no. They must just march round the place till they have compassed the city twelve times. And so, Brethren, there are certain spirits apt to say, "Could not we do more by adopting these methods and such other expedients." See how certain of our Brethren of another denomination feel that if they can but get a golden ladder—if they get the assistance of the regium donum—in this way Jericho's walls may be scaled. And there is the temptation to look about us and ask for some assistance over and above the power which lies in the simple Gospel—but we must not do it! Away with our methods and State-crafts and policies. Away with the suggestions of the crafty and cunning and all the wisdom of the worldly! God forbid that we should glory but in the Cross of Christ!

With the simplicity of children let us still believe that our Father's means are the best. And though as soldiers we cannot understand it, yet as children let us believe it and keep on compassing the city for Jericho's walls must fall—as sure as God is in Heaven. And I think there is another thing which must have made it difficult and it is this, that most probably the citizens of Jericho insulted them from the walls. I should think they kept far enough off to be out of arrowshot—but yet it is just possible that if they could not hear the taunt, "What are these feeble Jews doing," yet they must have seen the tokens of impudence and impertinence which came from over the wall.

This, mark you, is very galling to men of arms. We feel our hands fumbling at the hilts of our swords when provoked by the taunts and jeers of

our enemies. "What have you done," they say, "you soupers and Protestants and Methodists and Presbyterians, against the invincible bulwarks of Rome? Your paper bullets—what have they accomplished against the iron walls of Babylon?" We can hear their jeers. We know the sound of revelry and mirth. But what of this? Though, again, I say, as soldiers we might grow courageous and dash rashly to the fight, or retire from it because there is nothing to be earned but dishonor—yet, as Christians we will do what seems absurd to reason—but what is ever justifiable to faith. We will keep on in God's own style. We will fight His battles by His methods and we doubt not that though it does seem a strange, mad thing—to attempt to drive out the priests from Ireland by the simple proclamation of the Truth of God—yet the day shall come when Wisdom shall be justified of all her children.

Now, Brethren, we know that God has His reasons for making us wait. It is for His own Glory, we doubt not. We know that all things work together for good and we believe it will be ultimately for our profit. When I have read some masterly tragic poem, and verse after verse has dwelt upon the horrible portion of the tale, did I wish it shortened? Would I have had the author leave out one of those dark verses? Not I! It is true when the poem ended with a shout of victory and with the tramp of martial men through the city—when they returned in triumph—our heart leaped! We rejoiced when we came to that last stanza, but we wished the poem not shortened. We never wanted to have any of those verses blotted out.

God is writing a great poem of human history. The subject is the victory of His Truth, the destruction of Anti-Christ. Let the history be long. Who wants it shortened? Who wants a brief story on so exceedingly interesting a subject as this, from so great an Author? No, let it drag on what some may call its weary length—we are sure that when we come to read it, as God will write it, we shall wish the story longer! We will not complain of its extent, for the result is we shall see more of God and learn more of His mind. You want the millennium to come tomorrow, do you? May you get it, but I think it is probable you will not. I do not know how history appears to you who profess to understand it, but it does not read to me like a thing which is going to end just yet.

I have always been told about the "signs of the times." There always were such speculations—in 1766 and 1666—but the times of the end did not come. And I think they will not come now. It strikes me that we shall have something more elaborate yet than has ever come from the Divine pen and we may have to go not only through another canto, but through several more books before we shall come to the end of the story. One reason why I think the world's present state will not wind up for the present is because all the "prophets" say it will! And they have always been a lying generation, from the first even to the last. I mean the prophets who make the business profitable—who only use Scripture as the Norwood Gipsy uses the cards—who shuffle texts to foretell fortunes for nations and men.

We shall go on many a day yet. We may have to wait for another century, yes, another twenty centuries, perhaps! We cannot tell. But our business is still to remember that it shall be, after all, for our eternal benefit and for God's everlasting Glory to keep on—to wait, wait, wait till

we grow well-near weary. But the victory comes as surely, after all, as though it came at first. While we are waiting, however, I think it is well to take a little comfort from what we are *doing*. We are waiting—that is the posture of this Irish Society. But we may console ourselves in it, as the men who were compassing Jericho might have done. “Well,” they could say, “we have not taken Jericho, but there is Rahab that has believed—there are a few saved—you can count them on your fingers almost, but they are very precious and they are of the kind which should be esteemed very valuable.

There is Rahab. Her name is illustrious and her story, when it is told, has made many another Rahab seek and find a Savior. Not altogether without result was that attack on Jericho. And you have not lost your money, you that have subscribed to our Irish Society. There has been many a sinner saved and many can tell of eternal love that has sought out with eyes of patience eternity’s choice jewels. They can tell of Divine Sovereignty that has made its crown to glisten and glitter forever with those precious things when found. You have had Rahab, yes, and you have had some that God has made useful to others. I can bear witness that there have come from Ireland some of the most earnest young men upon whom my eyes ever rested—good men and true—who love their Lord and Master and whose highest delight is to speak well of His name. You may wait patiently on that reflection.

Moreover, the men of arms may say, “We do not take the city, it is true, but yet we keep our ground.” If we were to leave Jericho we should be giving up our foothold in Canaan. And if we forsake Ireland, we might relinquish all hope of the Papacy falling. But we keep our foothold—at least we take our stand on the rock! We have taken legal possession of the land and, though little, it is like the handful which William the Conqueror took up when he said, “I have taken the seizin of England hereby.” And though you may amalgamate the management of this Society with another, you will not give up the distinctive aim and object of the Society which is to keep a corner at least of the Emerald Isle for God and for His Christ.

And then, again, they can say, “We are bearing testimony.” Every man that looks over the wall of Jericho can see the Ark of the Covenant. He can see the troopers of God with their swords upon their thighs. They see what they never saw before! Oh, worshippers of idols, you see today the Ark of the true God borne round your walls! Oh you that bow to Baal and adore Ashtaroah, the gods of wood and stone, the true God, the Mighty One, Jehovah, is come out against you and the trumpets sound defiance to your power while the warriors of God shout for your overthrow! You are bearing testimony against the sin of Ireland. If you do not succeed, the time has not yet come for the shaking off the dust of your feet! In the meantime you must preach the Gospel for a testimony against them.

And one thing more, I think the men at arms felt, “We are on the spot when anything does occur.” As they went round the wall they said, “It stands strong and stern, but it will yield and then we are all ready when the breach is made.” You do not know what God may have in store for Ireland, or for any nation. According to the law which seems to regulate human society, there comes, every now and then, a great change. Who would

have dreamed of the convulsions of 1848 that thrones would have been so unsettled and that crowns would fall from monarchs' heads? Such convulsions may come again. No, unless the course of nature is changed, *must* come.

Then we are ready. We stand watching for the gap. O God, in Your eternal Providence be pleased now, even now, to send a convenient season. But if not, we will have the men ready when Your appointed time shall come. It was a grand thing when the earthquake came to shake the prison of Philippi that there should be a Paul and a Silas there ready to preach the sermon to the trembling jailor and his household! And so when the earthquake comes to Ireland, as it will come, we shall have a Paul and a Silas there. We may have many such, I trust. The more the better and all ready to stand up with, "Thus says the Lord!"

Why what cannot God do? Has not He lately given you an installment of what He can accomplish in the revival which seemed to shake the North of Ireland? It is true it occurred in a part where Romanism is less strong—but the same power which can move the stolidity of Protestantism can stir the fiery zeal of what is genuine religion in its way—I mean genuine, though mistaken—because like Paul they think they do God a service. The hearty spirit of the Irishman with his popery may certainly be reached by Divine Omnipotence, as well as the soul of the Irishman of the North with his much colder creed.

Let us have hope and go on compassing the city, not changing anything that is right and not neglecting that which is according to Scripture, but waiting till the time shall come. Now upon this I think I shall say no more, except again to ask friends practically to carry it out. Let us try and wait—wait patiently—not wait idly, but continue your subscriptions, continue your prayers, continue your interest in the Society, for God would have you wait.

III. And, thirdly, God would have His people WIN. I shall not say much about this. We will postpone that till the time when it occurs and then we shall not need to have any sermons about it but can all come together and hold a meeting to praise and bless God. Only let us say that if the analogy is carried out according to the siege of Jericho, the victory is very sure and, when it comes forth, very complete. Nothing could be more so. It may be very sudden, also, and it will be very glorious.

But *we* shall get nothing by it, for when Jericho fell nobody gained anything except to offer it unto the Lord—so we have to persevere in disinterested service—just toiling on for the Master, remembering that when success comes, it will be all His—every single atom of it. The Glory will be to Him and not to us and He will take care to send the success in such a manner that nobody shall be able to say, "Glory be to the Irish Society." Nobody shall be able to say, "Well done, Baptist denomination." No single minister or Evangelist shall be able to say, "Well done, myself." The one shout that shall go up to Heaven will be, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

I have thus spoken for the Society. I was asked to preach for it and I am obliged, I think, to preach with a text that bears somewhat on the subject. I observe many sermons that are preached for Societies might just as

well be preached any other day of the week before any other assembly on any other occasion. I do not know that is exactly what is needed, so if we have not dived deep into the doctrines of everlasting love, if we have not taken you to the Savior's Cross and offered you the invitations of the Gospel. If we have not done this and fifty thousand other things, there is a time for every purpose under Heaven. And to everyone there is a season and if we can keep the constituency of this Society working and waiting and make it in this way to come to be among the winning, we shall rejoice exceedingly!

Brethren, let us begin to carry out the sermon now by our contributions. Let us begin to do so by our prayers. Let us act out the spirit of it by trying to tell others what the Gospel is. Be this the motto of us all—

***“Now will I tell sinners round
What a dear Savior I have found.
Point them to the redeeming blood,
And cry, ‘Behold the way to God.’ ”***

Yet I dare not sit down till I say to every soul here, and especially to you who cannot take an interest in God's work because you are not saved yourself—remember we do not ask you to save and look after the souls of Irishmen. Your own soul must be the first concern. And the way of salvation is simply this—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

He it is who stands in the gap and makes an atonement for sin. Take Christ to be your Atonement, your Justifier, your Salvation and your All. And believing in Him you are saved! This is your duty and must not be postponed any longer. You must begin the work at home. Enlist on the side of Israel by following Israel's Leader. Our heavenly Joshua is the Son of God, believe on Him and you shall find salvation through His blood and acceptance before God through Christ. Then go out to be the means of saving others and God speed you through His blessed Spirit. Amen.

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ALL THE PEOPLE AT WORK FOR JESUS

NO. 1358

DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, MAY 9, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT CHRIST CHURCH, WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD.

[On Behalf of the London Missionary Society.]

I HAVE taken two texts from two successive chapters of the book of Joshua. The first is from Joshua the seventh, at the third verse. The spies who were sent to Ai returned to Joshua and said to him, "Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai." This policy led to a disastrous defeat and our other text gives us the Lord's command concerning the new attack. You will find it in the eighth of Joshua and the first verse—"The Lord said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be dismayed: take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai; see, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land."

The two texts may be condensed into—first, the advice of the spies, to employ only a *part* of the people in the assault upon Ai—"Let not all the people go up." And, secondly, the command of God to let *every* fighting man go forth to the war—"Take all the people of war with you." Brethren, like Israel, we are called to war and we have a greater than Joshua at our head, in whose name we conquer! There is an inheritance which as yet has been held by the adversary and in the name of God we have to drive him out. We are likely to experience difficulties very similar to those which were met with by the tribes and I doubt not that their history, (is it not written for our learning?), will prove exceedingly interesting to us if we have a mind to consider it.

We shall meet with the same defeats as they did if we fall into the same sins. And we shall win like victories if we are obedient to the commands which God has given us, which are very similar to those addressed to Israel of old. As in a glass we see ourselves in the 12 tribes, from the first day even until now, and in the texts before us there is a lesson for us, which may God, by His Grace, enable us to learn. I pray the Holy Spirit to illuminate our minds while we read in the book of the wars of the Lord and as soldiers of Christ learn from warriors of old time.

I. Let us consider THE ADVICE OF THE SPIES which led to such a shameful defeat. And here we shall have to deal with the error of supposing that only a part of the Church will be sufficient to perform the work of the whole—that a large proportion may be *idle*—and that the rest will be quite enough to fight the Lord's battles. I feel it to be an error which, though not perhaps theoretically held by any of us, is practically to be seen abroad in our Churches and needs to be met and put to an end.

In Joshua's day this error sprang up among the Israelites because, on account of their sins, God was displeased with them. The commencement of the chapter tells us that the Lord God was angry because the children

of Israel had committed a trespass in the accursed thing. Because of the sin of Achan, the anger of the Lord was kindled against the people. That was the *real* reason of their defeat before Ai, but out of that secret cause grew the more manifest source of defeat—because God was displeased with them, they were left *to themselves* and, therefore, they adopted a fatal policy. When God is in the midst of a Church, He guides its counsels and directs the hearts of men to go about His work in the wisest manner.

Is it not an old saying that, “Whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad?” And is not the heathen proverb the shadow of the fact that men become foolish when they have broken the commands of God and thus they are chastened for one fault by being permitted to fall into another? Even upon the Lord’s own people a measure of judicial blindness may come. You may depend upon it that when it becomes a doctrine that only special classes of men are to be expected to work in the Church, there is some great wrong in the background!

It is that Church which most of all has fallen into this fallacy and has drawn the sharpest line between those called the clergy and the poor unfortunate laymen, who, perhaps, may do something for God, but who cannot be expected, or, indeed, *allowed* to do anything in particular. In that Church, I say, the deadliest errors have found a home! We, too, may take it for granted that when we begin to leave Christian work to be performed by a minister, or the visitation of the poor to be solely done by a paid missionary, we have some Achan in the camp with a goodly Babylonian garment hidden in his tent.

There must be an accursed thing somewhere or other which has caused us to be left to so gross a folly! Either worldliness, or lukewarmness, or love of ease, or deep declension of heart must lie at the root of this slovenly and sluggish policy. It is not God’s mind that it should be so and He has evidently left us to ourselves when this fatal method is adopted. When the Holy Spirit rests upon the Church, this folly is practically avoided. No, it is not even thought of! God grant to the Churches represented here today that they may walk in such soundness of doctrine and have such spirituality of life that they may be full of the Divine Presence and never *dream* for a moment of sending only a portion of their members out to war and leave the rest to sit still! We cannot leave the battles of our Lord to be fought by mercenary troops! The whole army of men made willing in the day of the Lord’s power must go out under the command of our Divine Joshua to meet the foe!

Furthermore, this evil policy arose out of presumption engendered by success. Just a little while ago all Israel had marched around Jericho for seven days and on the seventh day, when they shouted, the city walls fell flat to the ground! Perhaps they began to say, “Did those massive walls fall when we compassed them about? O Israel, you are a great nation! And did they fall with nothing but a shout? Then the Hittite and the Hivite and every other enemy shall flee before us like chaff before the wind! Why, can there be any reason to carry all our baggage up the hill to Ai? What need to march so many men? Two or three thousand will be quite sufficient to carry that small city by storm. We can do wonders and, therefore, we need not put forth all our strength!”

Brethren, many dangers surround success! It is not much of it that any of us can bear. The full sail needs much ballast lest the boat is swamped. When in this, or any other part of the world, the Church sees many converts as the fruit of her labors—when there are great gatherings and a good deal of shouting, great interest excited and multitudinous conversions, it is very natural to calculate that the work has been easily done and needs no very severe or general effort. The idea is fostered that there is no need, now, for continued house-to-house visitation. There is no need for more missionaries. No need for regular plodding service in school and house meetings. No need to set our young men and women to work for Christ! The drill and organization of the regular army is in danger of being lightly esteemed. Blow the trumpet and the walls will come down easily enough! Jericho has fallen with shouts and marching—let us gather ourselves together and show that we are a mighty people who no longer need to go up unanimously and laboriously in rank and order to fight the fight as our fathers did!

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, this evil spirit must be exorcised, for it comes from the devil! God will not bless us if we tolerate this spirit. Why, some of us are altogether too great for our Lord Jesus to use in His work! Like Saul's armor, we are unfit for our David to put on if Goliath is to be slain. We must be more sensible of weakness, more mindful that the conversion of souls is the work of Omnipotence, or we shall see but little done. We must, ourselves, believe more fully in the need of earnest work for God and put forth all our strength and strain every sinew for Him, knowing that it is *His* power that works in us mightily when we strive with all our hearts. We must learn that our great Leader means us not only to shout and blow rams' horns, but to employ all the strength of every man in our ranks in His glorious cause. May we be delivered from the presumption which leads to the foolish course which Israel pursued.

Let us not forget that these children of Israel were forgetting their commission and violating the command of God. It is a terrible Truth of God that the tribes had been brought out of Egypt that they might be the executioners of Divine Vengeance upon races which had committed capital crimes for which the Lord had condemned them to be rooted out. The reward of the ministers of justice was to be the land which the infamous ones had polluted. They were charged to make no alliances with them, nor to intermarry with them—but to *execute* them for their crimes—and the commission was not given to *some* of the Israelites, but to *all* of them, for all were to be rewarded by a portion of the land. The charge was not given to Joshua and to the elders only, but to all the tribes.

As they all expected to have a dwelling place in Canaan, so they were all expected to conquer the territory by their own exertions. They were all an enlisted host for God and He never ordained that only a *part* should go forth in His great controversy with the condemned Canaanites. If we ever neglect to render universal service as a Church in the cause of Christ, we shall depart from our trust and call, for the Lord has sent *all* His disciples to testify of Him and contend against sin. He has sent us all to make known, everywhere, according to our ability, the glad tidings of His salva-

tion! And He has not given this command to this or that man, or to this or that body of men, but to all His chosen!

Every member of the body has its own office and no part of it can be allowed to lie dormant. To none has He said, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet and find fault with those who do the work." But to all His saints our Lord Jesus says—"As My Father has sent me, even so I send you." Every Christian is described in Scripture as being a light, a light not to be hidden, but seen of men. Every child of God is described as forming a part of that "city set on a hill which cannot be hid." It is not only the ministers who are the salt of the earth and the light of the world—but "*you* are the salt of the earth." "*You* are the light of the world"—*all* of you without exception!

Each one, in his own proportion and in his own place, is to be used as a vessel in the great house of the Lord and we shall get away from our true position and our high calling if we excuse ourselves or our brethren from personal service and then go and take part in public meetings and thank God for what other people have done on our behalf! These Israelites, in the new fashion which they were trying to set up, were departing from their own model. That model was, doubtless, the siege of Jericho. In that siege there was much dependence upon God, but there was no neglect of instrumentality! And, though all they did was to go round the city and shout, yet in so doing they were literally fulfilling orders and doing all that was commanded.

Yes, if this would bring down the walls they did it thoroughly—they marched as bid and shouted as desired. They all went round Jericho! They did not, some of them, sit in their tents and look on while the others paraded—they *all* filed out in order. It might seem to be a perfectly needless procession, but it was commanded by God and they all united in it. In martial array they all compassed the city and all gave the shout—and down came the walls—and then and there every man went up to them, leaping over the ruined walls to strike his foe in the name of the Lord! *That* was their precedent and pattern and they were departing from it very sadly when they said, "Let not all the people labor there."

What, then, is *our* model as a Church? Is it not Pentecost? Is it not those earliest days, that dawn of Christianity, that golden era to which we always look back as the heroic age of our holy faith? In that day did they not break bread from house to house, all of them? Did they not sell their lands and lay the price of them at the Apostles' feet? Was there not a burning enthusiasm throughout the entire company of disciples? We know it was so! And if we are to see, again, the triumphs of those primitive times, we must go back to primitive practice and every man and woman and child in the Church must be consecrated to the Divine service!

"Child," did I say? Yes, verily, for, "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings you have perfected praise." I suppose there is not one person present who heard that famous sermon by Matthew Wilks upon the universal service rendered by idolaters to their false gods, from the text, "The children gathered wood, and the fathers kindled the fire, and the women kneaded their dough to make cakes to the queen of Heaven." The

preacher's argument on that occasion was that which I would now press upon you, that *all* should take part in the work of the Lord! Distinct offices but united aims! Diverse operations but the same spirit! Many and yet one—so let it be! Would to God that the Church would recognize this more fully and so come back to the great precedents of her warfare.

Again, this error which we are carefully to avoid was, no doubt, the dictate of carnal wisdom. Spies were never of much use to Israel—two, only, of the first 12 were faithful—what did Israel want with spies? Better far had it been to walk by *faith*! To Ai they must send spies instead of going up at once in the confidence of faith? Evil came of it, for these spies counseled that only part of the people need labor up the hill. And, Brothers and Sisters, the best ministers of Christ, worthy of all honor, would be the cause of great mischief if once their carnal wisdom should make them think that they can supersede primitive plans with wiser inventions! I dare say the men-at-arms would have said that Israel's numbers were a hindrance to efficient fighting and that the common sort were in the way of trained warriors and encumbered the battle.

I know that some able Brethren are of this mind. Have they not said in acts, if not in words, "That young man is preaching—we wish he would be quiet! He makes such blunders in the Queen's English! He has a great deal of zeal, but there is no little danger in it. And those good Sisters—we know they do a good deal of work which was never done before, but—"and they shake their heads at them." That is often the main contribution of the more prudent sort to the service of God! They generously lavish upon the younger folks their grave looks and their shakes of the head at innovation and zeal. There is the Sunday school—well, that is a proper thing because it is a recognized agency—but if it were started today for the first time, many would shake their heads at that, also!

City mission work, again, is a tried and proved mode of operation, but in days gone by there was thought to be peril in lay agency, especially as the men were not college trained. Well, my Brothers and Sisters, there are many more holy agencies yet to be invented and though they will, none of them, be perfect, our wet blankets will not improve them! Better far will it be to help the good and, as for the little mischief which may come of imperfect agencies, let the wise men supply the antidote and rectify the blunders. Anything is better than lethargy and death! Thank God that our people have a mind to do good! If their zeal is inclined to wildfire, let us not quench it, but try to use it for holy purposes! After all, fire, wild or otherwise, is what we need!

If we have the fire from Heaven in the form of zeal for God's Glory, it can easily be regulated, but the most terrible calamity is to have no fire at all. "But," says one, "may not the ignorant and indiscreet advocacy of the Truth of God, by unqualified persons, do a great deal of harm to the cause we love?" It may. But is the Truth of God you believe so weak as to be in any serious danger from such an occurrence? Is not the Truth of God invincible and fully able to take care of herself? All she has to fear is the cramping and imprisoning agency of excessive prudence! With Weakness for her guardian, and Folly for her defender, she is yet safe! The God who protects her from her foes can assuredly save her from her friends! The

danger lies in our carnal wisdom which would cover the light with a bushel to prevent its being blown out—and wrap the talent in a napkin because it is only one.

We very frequently hear it said that there is no need for so much excitement and exertion and this, too, has come from our prudent men. We ought to take it coolly, they say—the thing went rightly enough in our grandfather's days—the great men of the past did very well without all this stir! Well, we have observed those wet blankets are still on sale and may be had at wholesale prices! Now, Brothers and Sisters, I do not know what you think about it, but I, for one, feel that there is much work to be done and very little time to do it in. If I plunge into the work with all my might, I shall do none too much, but, at any rate, all my little might is demanded by such a cause. There is a blessed leisure of the heart which sits at Jesus' feet, but I am sure that it is not inconsistent with that violence which the kingdom of Heaven suffers—"and the violent take it by force."

There were people who complained, in the days of Wesley and Whitefield, because their zeal caused a great deal of fanaticism. But, thank God, the blessed fanaticism spread throughout the land and it is not extinct, even now, nor shall it be, by God's Grace, but it shall go on increasing till Christ shall come! Let us bring up our men, the whole of the tribes, weak though they are—and though their weapons are no better than the axes and coulters with which Israel fought the Philistines! Let us spring upon our foe as one man, even as in the days of old! Let us all go up to Ai and, as surely as God was with His people, then, so surely will He be with our compacted hosts today—and the world shall learn, again, that there is a God in Israel!

Only once more upon this point. These children of Israel, in sending to the war only part of the men, were breaking in upon the Divine design. The Lord never intended to have two peoples, but one. And so we read that the Reubenites and the Gadites came over Jordan to the war, although their portion was already conquered. It was the Divine intent that they should be one army of the living God, each separate son of the seed of Abraham belonging to that army and fighting in it. He meant that not some, only, but all should see the mighty works of His hands working with them to overthrow their adversaries. When Jericho fell, all saw it. And if Ai should fall before the Divine power, they must *all* be there to see, with their own eyes, the glory of the Lord!

I am sure it is so with the Church of God today. Our Lord means to keep all His chosen ones as one army and to instruct them all as one unit. And when are we most manifestly one? When we get to work! If you come to declamation upon your own peculiar points, I shall wish you good morning. But if you are going to work for Jesus, suffer me to go with you. I have marked the history of organizations formed for no practical purpose and they have invariably come to an end—and I do not know that we need weep over the fact! But work to be done for Jesus is a mighty bond of union. Our God does not mean that His ministers should, alone, see all the deathbeds and be the sole spectators of the dying triumphs of His people. No, our Brothers and Sisters must visit, too, and have their faith strengthened and their prospects brightened!

He does not wish that preachers, alone, should see all the converts and encourage all the desponding ones. No, His wisdom perceives that it is good for all His servants to behold the trophies of His Grace and know how to use the encouragements of His promises! The Lord does not ordain that one or two, alone, should mourn over the evil of the hearts of men and do battle with sinners. No, He means *all* His servants, in their measure, to learn the lessons which holy warfare would teach them. Not to deal practically with souls is perilous to ourselves! Men who spend their time providing us with marvelous essays and papers in the reviews are, most of them, unsound in the faith. But if they went out into the world of real life to save men. If they had to battle *personally* with hard hearts and evil passions in actual conversion work, they would find that their fine-spun theories are of no use.

They would learn that the Puritan faith of our forefathers is the sturdiest of all weapons and the best adapted for the world as it is—and that the old Truth of God is the sword with which, alone, you can pierce the hearts of men. Work for Jesus is an education for a Christian! What an education it would be for the philanthropist to see what the agricultural laborer eats, or rather does not eat! What a lesson for the sanitary reformer to see with his own eyes where the people lodge! What an education for a man of wealth to spend a night or two in the crowded chambers where our London workmen dwell!

And in the same way, holy service is a training for us. In order to really know man's Fall and the way of redemption we must go among the people and labor for their conversion. Therefore our Lord will not excuse any of us from service in this war because it would be to our great damage to be away from it! It is for our encouragement and growth that we should take our share in it. I will finish this part of my subject with a parable. In the days of chivalry a certain band of knights had never known defeat. In all battles their name was terrible to the foe. On their banners was emblazoned a long list of victories.

But in an evil hour the leader of the knights summoned them in chapter and said—"My Brothers, we cause ourselves too much toil. We have a band of skilled warriors versed in all the arts of battle. These are quite sufficient for ordinary conflicts and it will be wise for the many, that they tarry in the camp and rest, or furbish their weapons for extraordinary occasions. Let the champions go alone. Yonder knight with his sword can cleave a man in two at a single stroke. And his comrade can break a bar of iron with his axe! Others among us are equally powerful, each one being a host in himself. With the terror of our name behind them, the chosen champions can carry on the war while the rest divide the spoil."

The saying pleased the warriors well, but from that hour the knell of their fame was rung and defeat defiled their standard. When they came together they complained of the champions because they had not sustained the honor of the order and they bade them exert themselves more heroically. They did so, but with small success. Louder and louder were the notes of discontent and the demands for new champions. Then one of the oldest of the knights said—"Brothers, why do you blame *us*? The mistake lies here—in the old time, when the enemy assailed us, a thousand

men were up in arms and we who led the van knew that a gallant army followed at our heels. But now you have made us solitary champions and the adversary takes heart to defy us, finding us unsustained. Come, all of you, with us to the fray, as before, and none shall stand against us.”

Brothers and Sisters, you need not that a man interpret this for you.

II. In the second place, my text contains THE COMMAND THAT ALL ISRAEL SHOULD GO FORTH TO THE FIGHT. “Take all the men of war with you.” I will mainly address myself to my Brothers in Christ and what I have to say to them I say humbly, speaking mainly to myself. Brothers, we must have all our Church members go to the war. I know this is our theory, but in practice we do not accomplish it. The baggage of our army is too heavy. The camp followers are too many. We need to turn out the drones and we need an increase of true working bees. How is it to be done? We must be, ourselves, deeply impressed with the evil brought upon idle Christians by their idleness and the evil which they bring upon the rest of the Church.

Only suppose a Christian—I will treat it as a mere supposition—living an idle life. Give him nothing to do and he will become morbid with introspection, or he will grow quarrelsome, contending with all who hold opinions contrary to his own. Or he will dishonor the name of Christ by sin. You know when it was that David fell with regard to Bathsheba. It was at the time when kings go forth to battle and he tarried at Jerusalem. He had not fallen into that sin if he had not played the sluggard at home. Where was his duty as commander-in-chief? Was it not in the camp? Indolence is temptation! Certain of our Churches are suffering from unsound teaching, but they are suffering as much from lack of work. The moss is growing upon them, the rust is eating them up. The gold is becoming dim, the silver is losing its brightness and all for lack of use!

Oh, Brothers, if we stand at the foot of a barren tree in the vineyard of Christ, we know what must happen. As we look upon it and see no fruit, our emotions ought to be those of bitterest sorrow for the axe is prepared for those that bear no fruit! Alas, that we should have Church members, not inconsistent in moral character, but excellent in many ways and yet cumberers of the ground! There is a great deal of charity about, of an evil sort, because it does not face the truth in honest desire for men’s good. Let us be too truly charitable to indulge in such fatal charity! Let us sigh and cry when we think of our useless Church members as branches of the vine that bear no fruit, of whom the Master has said that they shall be taken away—“For every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.” “Men gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned.”

What sorrow will fill our hearts if we reflect upon this! If we regard fruitless professors in this light, it will go further than anything else to make us successful in exciting all our Brothers and Sisters to active service! We need to be impressed with the mischief which idlers cause to others. One sickly sheep infects the flock! One member who does nothing lowers the tone of the whole body! The indolence of prominent professors is not merely the waste of their own labor, but of that of scores of others. Leading persons are looked upon as a sort of model for the rest and if So-and-So is content merely to fill his place in the pew and subscribe so

much or, rather, so little, per annum, then others will say, "We shall be up to the standard if we do the same."

Every man in an army who is not efficient and really serviceable is on the *enemy's* side. What can the enemy more desire than that the opposite army may be encumbered with the sick? What can be better news for them than to hear that the hospitals are crowded, for then they know that a large number of men are occupied with the sick and detained from the fight. The enemy claps his hands and cries, "These sick men are worth many a gun to us." Oh, useless professor! You cannot serve the devil better than by joining a Church and doing nothing! I want my Brothers to feel all this most keenly. I doubt not they *do* feel it, but I want to feel it more vividly myself, for when we get into a truly sensitive condition—when we who are ministers are alive upon this point—we shall stir up the people of God, all of them, and we shall see greater things than these!

Moreover, Brothers, we must hunt out the sin which leads to the evil against which we contend and I believe it is lack of vital godliness in many cases. I do not know how my friend, Mr. Newman Hall, finds it—I suppose he does not suffer much from it. But I know pastors who say they have very respectable members but nothing can be done with them. In some cases, Prayer Meetings are given up because the rich members come home from the city and dine at the hour which is usually selected for the Prayer Meeting and so they cannot attend. Dining is a most important business—it would seem to be more important than praying! Businessmen are so fatigued! It is a fact that we find carpenters and bricklayers and other workmen delighting in our Prayer Meetings. Is this because they do not work so hard as your city men?

In some quarters it is found impossible to carry on Church work effectively because the very persons who should be workers and officers are resolved that their liberal giving and Sunday worship shall be the whole of their assistance to the cause of Christ. As to laying themselves out for holy work, they look in your face with wonder—as if they thought you had lost your senses when you propose any very arduous service to them! Now, this shirking of prayer and service is to be exposed and denounced in all faithfulness! It is often the sin which grows out of too much ease, self-indulgence and luxurious living. It seems as if the more God gives a man, the less return he is inclined to offer. Whatever the secret sin of the Church may be, let us try to discover it and then, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, endeavor to educate all our members to work for the Lord. *There must be a continual insisting upon the personal obligations of Christians.*

We who are known as Baptists are of opinion that Baptism, as the personal act of a Believer, is a good lesson to our people as to their personal responsibilities. But I will not, for a moment, suppose that my Paedobaptist Brethren are less earnest in enforcing the same Truth of God. You, also, believe firmly in the personality of true religion. You teach the need of personal faith and consecration. Then we are agreed upon the great benefit of urging upon each man the duty of personal work for Christ. "What are you doing for Christ?" is a question to be asked of all! We must make every Believer feel that he is *not* his own, but bought with a price—that no amount of *giving* can compensate for personal labor for his Lord—

that even he who, by sickness and infirmity, cannot actually work should render his contribution to the general effort by continual *prayer*. No one must appear before the Lord empty, but either by active or passive service must prove his gratitude to God!

And then, while each is responsible, neglect by one is injurious to the common service of the whole. I saw a cart standing, this morning, on the roadside with one wheel chained—there was no fear of its moving with that one wheel fast. Sometimes one chained wheel in a Church will hinder all. We are all parts of a great machine and the stopping of one part does not simply mean the one stoppage, but the hindering of the whole organization! If a piece of bone in the body becomes dead, it is not simply useless, but it becomes the focus of mischief and the cause of pain. It begins to decay, disease forms and serious evil comes of it to the entire frame. A dead professor who is content to enjoy the doctrines without fulfilling the precepts of the Gospel becomes a source of serious danger in the Church of Jesus Christ—and we know it, indeed, to be so!

My Brothers, dwell upon the importance of the enterprise in which we are engaged and so act as to make others feel its importance. Why take all that trouble about furbishing up a doubtful point of divinity, which is of no earthly use when it is furbished up? Why all that Sunday morning spent in discussing far-fetched points of belief? What is this but sheer trifling? Some are greatly given to what they call, “thinking”—“dreaming” is the truer word! Better by half, plunge the old Gospel sword at once into men’s hearts and slay their sins in the name of the Lord, than stand quibbling about certain characters upon the hilt of the weapon! One sermon about nothing will do more harm than all your speculations will do good!

Men come to forget that the Gospel is meant *to save souls* and look upon it as a mass of interesting subjects. Certain sermons are said to be “intellectual treats”—I think that is what I have heard them called. Our religion does not mean that! It means fighting with sin! It is, if anything at all, one of real downright practical work for Jesus Christ and we must show that it is so. Our teaching nothing in elaborate language will make our people think that practical godliness is a small matter and that intellect is better than piety! We must make men feel that to save a soul is better than to possess all knowledge, or even to gain the whole world! While others are making a new gospel with a little “g,” let us labor to save souls by the old one. May God enable us to preach in awful earnest and by this means, God the Holy Spirit quickening us, we shall get all our people to march forward to the battle of their God!

Above all, let us pray for more Divine Grace. We must never read the story of old times and say, “What a splendid denomination ours has been! Can we not rest on our laurels?” Impossible! You must win fresh ones! Napoleon used to say, “Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me.” And it is so with Christians. You must advance! You must outdo the exploits of the past and eclipse the deeds of your sires, or you will show yourselves unworthy of them. The battle thickens, and how shall we meet the growing demands upon us except by seeking for seven-fold Grace? Our spiritual stamina needs to be increased!

If we were to collect a number of men all wheezing and coughing and only fit for the Consumption Hospital, and set them to work upon a railway, we might commend them for their diligence, but they would never accomplish much. On the other hand, gather together a company of burly, brawny men and they will say, "Who are you, O strong mountain?" and, before it can answer, it will be turned to a plain! See how they use the pick and the shovel! Vital strength is their motive force. O God, strengthen us! We are willing, some of us, but our strokes are feeble! Grant us, we beseech You, more of Your Holy Spirit and we shall accomplish great things! Strength delights in work, feebleness is afraid of it. Spiritual strength will produce universal spiritual service for the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have done when I have looked into the future for a moment. If it should ever come to pass that the minister and all his people went forth to the war for King Jesus, what would happen? I seem to be in Paradise when I think of it! If all, without exception, who name the name of Jesus, went earnestly into His vineyard, what life there would be and what unity in all the Churches! There would be no longer a name to live, but real living! There would be no divisions if all were, alike, zealous for the Glory of the common Master! You would not hear of Church meetings which are scenes of disturbance and Churches where pastors are unhappy—such things would be regarded as extinct animals of the ages gone by! Then we should hear no complaints of our not being strong enough to do the work of our great cities and scattered hamlets. The most feeble Church, if everyone did his share, would be strong enough for its position.

Moreover, there would be no lack of funds for any holy enterprise. Ah, if God's treasure received from all as it receives from some, we should almost have to tell the people to stay their hands because we should scarcely know how to use all their gifts! But the wealth which belongs to Christ and the service kept back from Him canker in men's coffers—and the amount of which the Lord is robbed is almost beyond computation! The Missionary Societies, very well sustained on the whole, do not receive more than a tenth or a hundredth part of what God's people ought to give to so wonderful a work! If the merchant prince who contributes what is thought to be a handsome sum to Christ, only gave in the same proportion as many a pious girl who has to earn her living at so many stitches for a penny—and if all gave as the few are giving—we should soon supply all nations with missionaries!

And if this were the case, what enterprises would be undertaken? What overflowing of Christian zeal should we perceive? We should be sending out messengers to discover every region which remained unconquered and we should at once be up and doing it, too! Then the mission field would be strong with men of most noble fitness. I do not know what you think about it, but it seems strange to me that we, here in this little island, are so closely packed together and yet a few scores or hundreds only go into the mission field. "Some of us have large spheres here and we cannot be expected to go, can we?" I answer, the ablest preacher that ever lived is not too good for missionary work! The most useful man at home is probably the fittest for the foreign field.

Let us each question his own heart as to the claims of the heathen. For my own part, I dare not sleep till I have honestly considered whether I ought to go or not. We tell our young men in the College that they must prove that they have *not* to go, or else their duty is clear. If some of the men of Israel had said to Joshua, "We cannot go to Ai," Joshua would have replied, "You must prove that you cannot go or you may not be excused." All other things being equal, ministers should take it for granted that it is their *duty* to invade new territory unless they can prove to the contrary. When I think of the number of young men who are well educated and can read a capital paper at the Mechanics' Institution and profess to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, it grieves me to see their talents dedicated so largely to meaner ends!

Oh, bleeding Lamb, it does seem strange that we have a greater passion for literature than for You! We care more for fleeting than for enduring things! France is needing the Gospel. See what one beloved Brother in Paris has been able to do—are there none who can do the same for other cities in that neighbor country? Here and there a good man can say, "I have made a competency"—why not live and employ it where you can lay it out personally for the spread of the Redeemer's Kingdom? Such a thing is being done by a few—it is not, therefore, impossible—and you who follow the grand example shall have your reward.

Look what Pastor Harms did in the village of Hermansburg, how he stirred up all the people until they gave themselves and their property to the Lord and built a ship for the mission and went forth in it to Africa—company after company—to evangelize! Should it not be the ambition of a minister to feel that if he stays at home he will at least, by the Holy Spirit's help, produce missionaries by the scores in the village where he labors! I know the day comes that he will be thought most happy who suffered and labored most for Christ. When this great fight is over, he who is most scarred will be most honored, and he who dwelt at home at ease will think himself but sparsely blessed because he did not do his share in the war.

Let us be all at work for Christ and His redeemed Church! All at work, at all times and in all ways for Christ! It is for that I plead—and then we will take another motto and say—The world for Christ and Christ for every nation under Heaven! This *will* be accomplished when the Spirit has awakened us all. O blessed Spirit, convert the Church and it will convert the world!

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

**THE PASTOR'S RETURN.
THREE SPECIALLY- SELECTED SERMONS TO HIS
CHURCH, CONGREGATION, READERS AND FRIENDS,
CONSISTING OF
A RETROSPECT,
A PROSPECT [No. 1883]
AND AN
EXHORTATION [No. 1884.]**

**RETROSPECT—
“THE LORD HAS BLESSED”
NO. 1882**

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

*“Inasmuch as the Lord has blessed me until now.”
Joshua 17:14.*

IT is not an easy task to divide land among different claimants. Joshua divided Canaan with strict impartiality. He was a man of God and he was also shrewdly wise, as you may gather from many of his speeches. But, for all that, he could not satisfy everybody. He who would please all attempts the impossible! God Himself is quarreled with. If it is the design of Providence to please men, it is a melancholy failure. Do we not find men everywhere dissatisfied with their portions? This man would like his lot if it were not where it is and that man would be perfectly satisfied if he had a little more. One would be contented with what he has if he could always keep it, while another would be more pleased if life could be shortened. There is no pleasing men! We are like the sons of Joseph in the chapter before us, ready to complain of our inheritance. It should not be so. We who have pined in the wilderness of sin should rejoice that we have entered the land of promise and we ought to be glad to have a portion among the people of the Lord. Contentment should be natural to those who are born of the Spirit of God, yes, we ought to go beyond contentment and cry, “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits.”

Brethren, the best advice that I can give to each man among you is that he should endeavor to make the best of the portion which God has given him, for, after all, *Joshua* had not arbitrarily appointed Ephraim and Manasseh their lots, but they had fallen to them by the decree of God. Their portions had long before been marked out by a higher hand than Joshua's. You and I ought to believe that—

***“There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.”***

Let us fall back upon predestination and accept the grand Truth of God that, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." An all-wise God disposes His people according to His sovereign will. Let us not seek to alter our destiny, but let us try to make the best of our circumstances. This is what Joshua exhorted Ephraim and Manasseh to do. "You have a hill country crowned with forests: hew them down. You have fat valleys occupied by Canaanites: drive out the present inhabitants." O Sirs, if we would but thoroughly enjoy what God has freely given us, we would be happy to the fullest and even anticipate the joys of Heaven! We have a deep river of delights in the Covenant of Grace, yet we are content to paddle about its shores. We are only up to our ankles, the most of us, whereas the waters are "waters to swim in." A great sun of everlasting love shines upon the globe of our life with tropical force, but we get away to the North Pole of doubt and fear—and then complain that the sun has such little heat—or that he is so long below the horizon. He who will not go to the fire ought not to complain that the room is cold! Did we heartily feed upon what the Lord has set on our table, accept the ring which He has prepared for our finger and wear the garments which He has provided for our comfort, we might, here on earth, make music and dancing before the Lord!

I am going to speak upon my text thus—First, here is *a confession*, which I think many of us will be very happy to make—"Inasmuch as the Lord has blessed me until now." Secondly, here is *an argument*, which is stated after the manner of logic—"Inasmuch as the Lord has blessed me until now, therefore," so and so.

I. We look at our text, then, first of all, as A CONFESSIO—"The Lord has blessed me until now."

I will not at present speak to those of you upon whom the blessing of God has never rested. Remember, my dear Hearers, that every man is either under the curse or under the blessing. They that are of the works of the Law are under the curse. Those upon whom their sin is resting are under the curse, for a curse always attends upon sin. Though we read no denunciation service; though we do not speak to you from Ebal and Gerizim, with the blessing and the curse, yet rest assured that there *is*, before the living God, a separation of the precious from the vile, and each day there is a judgment which, in God's apprehension, puts some upon the right hand with the, "Come, you blessed," and others upon the left hand with the, "Depart, you cursed." This will be finally done in "that day of days for which all other days were made." At this hour, my Hearer, if you are not the blessed of the Lord, you are resting under the dark shadow of a curse from which I pray God you may at once escape! Faith in Him who was made a curse for us is the only way to the blessing.

But I speak to as many as have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the Lord says, "Surely, blessing I will bless you."

You can say at this time, "God has blessed me until now." He has blessed you with *those blessings which are common to all the house of Israel*. Ephraim and Manasseh had received a blessing when God blessed Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, seeing they were in the loins of Abraham. You and I, who are in Christ, are partakers of all Covenant blessings in Christ

Jesus. "If children, then heirs," and if we are children of God, then we are heirs of all things. I like to think of the old Scottish woman who not only blessed God for the porridge as she ate it, but thanked God that she had a Covenant right to the porridge! Daily mercies belong to the Lord's household by Covenant right and that same Covenant right which will admit us into Heaven, above, also gives us bread and water here below. The trifles in the house and the jewels of the house belong equally to the children. We may partake of the common mercies of Providence and the extraordinary mercies of Grace without stint. None of the dainties of the royal house are locked up from the children. The Lord says to each Believer, "Son, you are always with Me and all that I have is yours." "You are Christ's and Christ is God's" and, therefore, "all things are yours."

Can you not say—"The Lord has blessed me *until now*"? Has He ever denied you one of the blessings common to the covenanted family? Has He ever told you that you may not pray, or that you may not trust? Has He forbidden you to cast your burden on the Lord? Has He denied you fellowship with Himself and communion with His dear Son? Has He laid an embargo on any one of the promises? Has He shut you out from any one of the provisions of His love? I know that it is not so if you are His child! And you can heartily exclaim, "The Lord has blessed me until now." "Such honor have all the saints." By His gracious past of love, the Lord guarantees to His redeemed a future of equal blessedness, for His loving kindness never departs from those on whom it lights.

But then, dear Friends, besides this, Ephraim and Manasseh had *special blessings*, the peculiar blessing of Joseph which did not belong to Judah, or Reuben, or Issachar. In the end of the Book of Genesis, you will see how Jacob blessed the two sons of Joseph and you will observe with what prodigality of benediction he enriched them among his sons. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall." Moses also, before he died, seemed to glow with a Divine fervor when he came to the tribe of Joseph! He blessed him, in some respects, above his brothers. Now, I think that many of you may say, "Though I am least of all His saints, yet in some respects the Lord has especially blessed me until now." I believe that every flower in a garden which is tended by a wise gardener could speak of some particular care that the gardener takes of it. He does for the dahlia what he does not for the sunflower. Something is needed by the rose that is not required by the lily. And the geranium calls for an attention which is not given to the honeysuckle.

Each flower wins from the gardener a special culture. The vine has a dressing all its own and the apple tree a pruning peculiar to itself. There is a blessing for the house of Manasseh and a blessing for the house of Ephraim. And so is there a special benediction for each child of God. All the names of the tribes were written on the breastplate, but there was a different color in the jewel allotted to each tribe and I believe that there is a specialty of Grace about every child of God. There is not only an election from the world, but an election out of the elect! Twelve were taken from the disciples; three were taken out of the 12—one greatly beloved was

taken out of the three. Uniformity of love does not prevent diversity of operations. As a crystal is made up of many crystals, so is Grace composed of many Graces. In one ray of the light of Grace there are seven colors. Each saint may tell his companion something that he does not know and in Heaven it will be a part of the riches of Glory to hold commerce in those specialties which each one has for himself alone.

I shall not be you, neither will you be me. Neither shall we two be like another two, or the four of us like any other four, though all of us shall be like our Lord when we shall see Him as He is! I want you each to feel at this hour—"The Lord has blessed *me* until now." Personally, I often sit down alone and say, "Why this to *me*?" I cannot but admire the special goodness of my Lord to me. Sister, have you never done the same? Have you not said to yourself, in deep humility, "Surely, I have been a woman highly favored?" Do you not, my Brother, often feel that the name given to Daniel might be given to you, "O man greatly beloved"? Perhaps you are greatly tried, but then, you have been graciously sustained! Perhaps you are free from troubles—then you are bound to bless the Lord for a smooth path. A peculiarity of love colors each gracious life. As God is truly everywhere, yet specially in certain places, so does He manifest His love to all His people and yet each one enjoys a specialty of Grace. "The Lord has blessed *me* until now."

I think, besides this, that these two tribes which made up the house of Joseph also meant to say that, not only had God blessed them with the common blessings of Israel and the special blessing of their tribe, but also with *actual blessings*. As far as they had gone, they had driven out the Canaanites and taken possession of the country. They had not received all that was promised, but God had blessed them *until now*. Come, Brothers and Sisters, we have not driven out all the Canaanites yet, but we have driven out many of them! We are not what we hope to be, but we are not what we used to be! We cannot yet see everything clearly, but we are not blind as once we were! We have not overcome every sinful propensity, but no sin has dominion over us, for we are not under the Law, but under Grace! We do not know all that the Lord will yet teach us, but what we do know, we would not lose for 10,000 worlds! We have not seen our Lord as He is, but we have seen Him—and the joy of that sight will never be taken from us. Therefore, before the Lord and His assembled people, we joyfully declare that "The Lord has blessed us until now."

Let us expand this confession a little, and speak thus—

First, *all the blessings that we have received have come from God*. Do not let us trace any blessing to ourselves, or to our fellow men, for though the minister of God may be as a conduit to bring us refreshing streams, yet all our fresh springs are in God and not in men. Say, "*The Lord has blessed me until now.*" Trace up every stream to the fountain, every beam to the sun and say, "I will bless the Lord as long as I live, for *He* has blessed me. Every good gift which has come to me has come from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Trite as the thought is, we have often to recall God's people to the confes-

sion—that all the blessings of the Covenant come from the God of the Covenant.

The Lord has given each one of us a great multitude of blessings. He has blessed us in His promises. Oh, that we did but know how rich we are! He has blessed us in His Providence—in the brightness and in the darkness of it—in its calms and in its storms, in its harvests and in its famines. He has blessed us by His Grace. I shall not dwell upon these themes—I would need a century for my sermon if I did! But He has blessed you, Beloved, who are in Christ, with all heavenly blessings in Christ Jesus, according as He has chosen you in Him from before the foundation of the world! Never will you be able to reckon up, even in eternity, the total sum of the benedictions which God has bestowed upon you in promise, in Providence and in Grace! He has given you "all blessings" in Christ and that is the short way of putting it. He has given you more than you know of, more than you have asked for, more than you can estimate! He has given you not only many things, but *all* things, in Christ Jesus, and He has declared that, "No good thing will he withheld from them that walk uprightly." The Lord has, indeed, blessed us until now!

And, mark you, there has been a continuity of this blessing. God has not blessed us, and then paused, but He has blessed us "*until now*." One silver thread of blessing extends from the cradle to the grave. "He has blessed us until now." When we have provoked Him; when we have backslidden from Him; when we have been making an ill use of His blessings, yet He has kept on blessing us with a wondrous perseverance of love. I believe in the perseverance of the saints because I believe in the perseverance of the love of God, or else I would not believe in it. The Lord Himself puts it so—"I am God, I change not; therefore, you sons of Jacob are not consumed." There is an unconquerable pertinacity in the love of God! His Grace cannot be baffled or thwarted, or turned aside—His goodness and His mercy follow us all the days of our lives.

In addition to that continuity, there is a delightful consistency about the Lord's dealings. "The Lord has blessed us until now." No curse has intervened. He has blessed us and only blessed us. There has been no, "yes" and "no," with Him—no enriching us with spiritual blessings and then casting us away. He has frowned upon us, truly, but His love has been the same in the frown as in the smile. He has chastened us sorely, but He has never given us over unto death.

And, what is more, when my text says, "The Lord has blessed me until now," there is a kind of prophecy in it, for, "until now," has a window *forward* as well as backward! You sometimes see a railway carriage or truck fastened on to what goes before—but there is also a great hook behind. What is that for? Why, to fasten something *else* behind, and so to lengthen the train. Any one mercy from God is linked on to all the mercy that went before it—but provision is also made for adding future blessings! All the years to come are guaranteed by the ages past! Did you ever notice how the Bible ends? It closes with that happiest of conclusions—marriage and happiness—the marriage of the Lamb is come and His bride has made herself ready. Infinite felicity closes the volume of revealed his-

tory! Earthquakes, falling stars and the pouring out of vials follow with terrible speed—but it all ends in everlasting bliss and eternal union! Even thus shall it be with us, for the Lord has blessed us until now.

Until now—*until now*—He has blessed us and it implies that He will always bless us. Never will the silver stream of His love cease to flow! Never will the ocean of His Grace cease to wash the shores of our life. He is, He must be to His people the blessed and blessing God. "Surely blessing I will bless you," is a word of Jehovah that stands fast forever and ever! Thus far is our confession of gratitude.

II. Now we come to THE ARGUMENT, which I wish to press home upon all my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ. The tribe of Joseph says, "Inasmuch as the Lord has blessed me until now."

What is the inference from that fact? The argument that the sons of Joseph wanted to draw was peculiarly Jewish—it was the inference of business. It was the plea that they should have more because they had so much. Because they had one lot, therefore they were to have two portions in the promised land. I want no man to infer that because God has blessed him in Providence, he is to expect to have still more riches and still more pleasure. Ah, no! Do not wish to have your portion in this life, lest you get it, for then you will be as the ungodly.

Their argument, again, was one of grumbling. They said, "God has blessed us until now," as much as to say, "If we do not get two portions, we shall not say that God is still blessing us, but we will draw a line and say *until now*." God has many very naughty children. They fall into quarrels with their heavenly Father. "Ever since that dear child died," says one, "I never felt the same towards God." "Ever since my mother was taken away," cries another, "I have always felt that I could not trust God as I used to do." This is shocking talk! Have done with it! If you quarrel with God, He will say to you, "It is hard for you to kick against the pricks." There is no happiness but in complete submission. Yield and all will end well, but if you stand out against the Most High, it is not God's rod that makes you smart—it is a rod of your own making. End this warfare by saying, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him." Do not say, "He blessed me up to a certain point and then He changed His mind." This is a most slanderous falsehood!

Let us say, rather, "The Lord has blessed me until now and this is cause for holy wonder and amazement. Why should the Lord have blessed *me*?"—

"Pause, my soul! Adore and wonder!

Ask, 'Oh, why such love to me?'

Grace has put me in the number

Of the Savior's family!

Hallelujah!

Thanks, eternal thanks to Thee."

We read in 2 Samuel 7:18, 19, "Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me until now? And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" Thus let each one of us be amazed at the great loving kindness of the Lord.

Be full of *holy gratitude*. Do not say, "I will look on the bright side." Beloved, the Lord's ways to us are all bright! Do not say, "I will trust God where I cannot trace Him," but rather trace God everywhere! Get into the state of that poor man who was so greatly blessed to pious Tauler. He wished the man a good day. The man replied, "Sir, I never had a bad day." "Oh, but I wish you good weather." Said he, "Sir, it is always good weather. If it rains or if it shines, it is such weather as God pleases and what pleases God pleases me."

Our sorrows lie mainly at the roots of our selfishness—and when our self-hood is dug up, our sorrow, to a great extent, is gone. Let us, then, utter this text tonight, "Inasmuch as the Lord has blessed me until now," with hearty gratitude for all His holy will. Summing up gains and losses, joys and griefs, let us say with Job, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord."

Say also, with *holy confidence*, "The Lord has blessed me until now." Speak as you find. If any enquire, "What has God been to you?" answer, "He has blessed me until now." The devil whispers, "If you are the son of God," and he then insinuates, "God deals very harshly with you. See what you suffer. See how you are left in the dark!" Answer him, "Get you behind me, Satan, for surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life! And if God takes from me any earthly good, shall I receive good at the hand of the Lord and shall I not receive evil?" He who can stand to this stands on good ground! "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." But he who gets away from this, drifts I know not where! Come, let us, each one, bless the Lord and say, "If He should treat me harshly in the future, I will still praise Him for what He has done until now."

I remember saying to myself, when I was in sorrow for sin, that if God would only forgive me my sin and give me rest from my despair, if I had to live in a dungeon on bread and water, all the rest of my life, I would do nothing else but sing to His praise." I am afraid that I have not fulfilled that promise, but I confess my wrong in not having done so. You, my Brothers and Sisters, I dare say, made much the same spiritual covenant with God and you have not stood to it. Let us unite our sincere confessions and say, each one, "The Lord has blessed me until now; therefore blessed be His name."

Furthermore, if this be true, let us resolve to *engage in enlarged enterprises*. If the Lord has blessed us until now, why should He not bless us in something fresh? I need to say something to you as a Church, dear Friends, for the text is a Church text, and the, "me," here comprehends all the tribe of Joseph. Let us joyfully say as a Church, "The Lord has blessed us until now." Strangers will excuse us if we have a little mutual joy in what the Lord has done for us during a considerable period of time. Those who have been with me from our earliest days, when we were a mere handful of people, may well rejoice that the Lord taught us to pray and to trust when we were so few and feeble. And then He visited us with favor and greatly multiplied us! And since then He has continued to bless us without pause or stint. These 33 years He has been with us, we have

never been without conversions, never without fresh labor for Christ and fresh projects—and never a failure, never a schism, or a division of heart!

I am amazed and humbled by the Lord's goodness. We have gone from strength to strength in the Lord's work. I have been feeble and, I fear I may be so still, but the Lord has not ceased to work by you who are with me. Well, what then? College, Orphanage, Colportage, Evangelists, Mission Halls—34 of them, Sunday schools, and so forth. What then? "Stop," says the devil. You would like us to stop, would you not, foul Fiend? But we shall do nothing of the kind! Wherever you are, O Fiend, in this city, it is our business and our desire to fight with you and drive you out! We cannot cease to be active, for the Lord has blessed us until now. "You will get to meddling with too much, and get too many irons in the fire." None of them in your fire, O Satan!

Brothers and Sisters, we must have more fire, and more irons in it! I beseech you, do not slacken in any way, but press on! Let us do more. Have I an alabaster box anywhere? Is it lying by? Perhaps the smell may begin to ooze out. It is not safe in the drawer. It may get cracked and broken. Let me have the privilege of breaking it, myself, and pouring it on my Master's feet, that I may anoint them with the most precious thing I have! Can you not think of something you could do for Jesus, each one of you personally? Cannot the whole Church say to itself, "We must keep our institutions going at a greater rate for Christ's sake"? The world is very dark and needs more light; the poor are very hungry and need bread and the ignorant are very faint to know more.

Did you say, "Now, do not project anything"? I do not know that I shall, but at the same time, I am not sure that I shall not! If the Lord has blessed us until now, let us go a little further. When certain Brethren raise a stone of Ebenezer, they sit down on it. That is not what the stone is meant for. I have a commission to put spikes on the top of those stones! You must not dream of sitting down upon—"Until now has the Lord helped us." The voice from the Throne of God says "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." Though the sea rolls before you, forward! Forward, in God's name! Amen.

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

DRIVING OUT THE CANAANITES AND THEIR IRON CHARIOTS NO. 2049

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 12, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots
and though they are strong.”
Joshua 17:18.***

WHEN the children of Israel had come to Canaan and by God's good care had entered into the land that flowed with milk and honey they were not immediately at rest. The Canaanites were there—there in possession, there in strong cities—which seemed to be walled up to Heaven. And they had to drive out these Canaanites before they could possibly possess the country. In fact, this was the reason why they were sent there. The Canaanites had been outlawed by God. They had been guilty of such horrible offenses that He had adjudged their race to destruction.

It was necessary for the purity of the world that ancient races which had become so horribly depraved should be removed from it and the Israelites were brought to the land as the Lord's executioners—to smite the Canaanites and exterminate them. Some have dared to speak of it as a hideous massacre. But being commanded of the great Judge who has the power of life and death it is to be solemnly regarded as a terrible execution for which there was a stern necessity.

We may rest well assured that He who commissioned His officers to slay had the most urgent reason for the employment of their swords. God knew best what was needful for the morals of the world and He came to the conclusion that the iniquity of the Amorites was full and that they could not be longer endured. The Israelites could not, therefore, enter upon their inheritance without first driving out the aboriginal races, since these had become the adversaries both of God and man.

You will see, then, dear Friends, that Canaan is hardly a full type of Heaven. It may be used so in a *modified* sense. But it is a far better emblem of that state and condition of soul in which a man is found when he has become a Believer and by believing has entered into rest—but not into an absolutely perfect deliverance from sin. He has come to take possession of the Covenant heritage but finds the Canaanite of sin and evil still in the land—both in the form of original sin within and of temptation from without. Before he can fully enjoy his privileges he must drive out his sins. It is absolutely needful—before he can experience the blessings of the Covenant of Grace fully—that he should contend with the iniquities and evils which are within him and around him.

He must drive out the various tribes of enemies which, for a long time, have been dwellers in the land of his nature. No doubt many young Chris-

tians think that when they are converted the warfare is all over. No—the battle has just begun. You have not come to the finish line—you have only come to the starting block. You have entered upon the land in which you will have to fight and wrestle and weep and pray until you get the victory. That victory will be yours but you will have to agonize to obtain it. He that has brought you into this condition will not fail you nor forsake you. But, at the same time, not without strong contentions and earnest strivings will you be able to win your inheritance.

Be not deluded with the idea that you may sit down at your ease—the very reverse will happen to the true heir of Heaven. I speak at this time to many who understand the meaning of spiritual warfare and I scarcely need remind them that they are called to be men at arms and not men at ease. I speak to some, perhaps, who do not yet understand much of warfare. But they will know before long, for no Believer's sword will long sleep in its scabbard. Sin is a powerful enemy—and if you are a child of God, you will have to fight against it. If you are an heir of the true Canaan—you are born first to a heritage of warfare and ultimately to the vast inheritance of unbroken and everlasting peace—

***“The land of triumph lies on high,
There are no fields of battle there;
Lord, I would conquer till I die,
And finish all the glorious war.”***

Our text is a speech of war to the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim. Joshua said to them, “You are a great people and have great power—you shall not have one lot only.” But he told them when he gave them two lots they would have to drive out those who were then in possession—“You shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots and though they are strong.” May the Holy Spirit prepare us for our life-struggles by the meditations of this hour!

I. Our first reflection shall be—WE MUST DRIVE THEM OUT. It is a command from God—“You shall drive out the Canaanites.” Every sin has to be slaughtered. Not a single sin is to be tolerated. Off with their heads! Drive the sword into their hearts! They are all to die. Not one of them may be spared. The whole race is to be exterminated and so buried that not a bone of them can be found. Here is a labor worthy of all the valor of faith and the power of love.

They must all be driven out, for every sin is our enemy. I hope we have no enemies in this world among our fellow men. It takes two to make a quarrel. And if we will not contend there can be no contention. We are neither to give nor to take offense. But if it is possible, as much as lies in us, we are to live peaceably with all men. I trust that we have forgiven everybody who has ever harmed us and would desire to be forgiven by all against whom we have done anything wrong. But every sin, every evil, of every shape, is our true enemy—against which we are to wrestle to the bitter end. You cannot say to any sin, “You may dwell in my heart and be my friend.” It cannot be your friend—evil is our natural and necessary enemy and we must treat it as such.

The Seed of the woman will never find a friend in the seed of the serpent any more than Eve found a friend in the serpent that beguiled her. Any pretense of friendship with iniquity is mischievous. If you are a friend of sin, you are not a friend of God. All sorts of sins are our enemies and we are to hate them with our whole soul. If you can say of any sin, "I do not hate it," then you may gravely question whether you were ever born again. One of the marks of a child of God is that, although he sins, he does not love sin. He may fall into sin but he is like a sheep which, if it tumbles into the mud, is quickly up again—for it hates the mire.

The sow wallows where the sheep is distressed. Now we are not the swine that love the slough, though we are as sheep that sometimes slip with their feet. Would to God that we never did slip! What a misery sin is to us! Evil is the worst of evils to godly men. The Lord send us all the sorrow He pleases—if He will but prevent our ever falling into sin, the greatest of our griefs will be non-existent. Every sin hates us and we hate every sin. There is no sin, dear Friends, that can help you in any case whatever—it will seriously harm and hinder you. Sin is that ill wind which blows nobody any good. There is no beauty in sin. There is no comfort in sin. There is no strength in sin. There is nothing whatsoever good in sin.

From the crown of its head to the sole of its foot, sin is all bruises and putrefying sores. There is nothing to be said in its favor. And I am sure that no heir of Heaven would take up its cause and plead for it. It is evil, only evil and that continually. While you hate sin, sin hates you. It will do you all the hurt it can. It will never be satisfied with the mischief that it has worked in you. It will try to lead you farther and farther into danger so as to bring you down to Hell. Sin would utterly destroy you if it could and it certainly could and would, if the Grace of God did not prevent it. Proclaim, then, a ceaseless warfare against all sin. Cry, "war to the knife with sin!"

The Canaanites war with you—take care that you war with them. Up with the blood-red banner! Draw the sword and never sheath it again. So long as there remains sin in our heart, or in our life, or in the world, it is to be fought against to the death. Again, we should contend against all these Canaanites and drive them out—for sin is our Lord's most cruel enemy. Jesus abhors all evil and evil in every shape persecuted Him. All sorts of sins He bore in His own body on the tree. From our sins, all of which were laid upon Him, came the lashings of His back, when the whip plowed deep furrows. From our sins came the bloody sweat that covered Him from head to foot.

From our sins came the crown of thorns, the nails, the spear, the vinegar and gall and the dread death of agony. Sin—oh, how our Lord loathes it! In putting it away from us He drank of that cup from which, for a moment, He started, saying, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." And this it was which caused Him such an agony. Sin to Jesus was horror, torment, death. Jesus abhors sin with all the force of His holy nature. Saved by Jesus will you not hate sin as He

did? Would any person here lay up in his drawer as a treasure the knife with which his father was murdered?

Our sins were the daggers that slew the Savior. Can we bear to think of them? Oh, that our tears might flow at the very thought of our horrible conduct towards our Lord, whom we slew by our sins—and may we never, never, never indulge any of all our iniquities—for no one of them is innocent of the murder of our best Beloved. They conspired to take away His life. Let us execute them at once—

***“Oh, how I hate those lusts of mine
That crucified my God;
Those sins that pierced and nailed His flesh
Fast to the fatal wood!
Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die;
My heart has so decreed—
Nor will I spare the guilty things
That made my Savior bleed.
While with a melting, broken heart,
My murdered Lord I view,
I’ll raise revenge against my sins,
And slay the murderers, too.”***

Remember, Brethren, we cannot have Christ and have one sin reigning in our hearts. We come to Christ as sinners but when we receive Christ we hear Him say, “Sin shall not have dominion over you.” Sin may look into our nature, as it does, with its tempting witcheries. Sin may ride through our nature, as it does, trampling down all that is good. Sin may lurk in our nature, as it does, ready to plot against the King of kings. But it cannot *reign* in our *nature*, for it has come under another sovereignty—Christ is on the throne. “Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life” within our nature at this present time. It is not possible that we could set a single sin on any throne—even though it should be lower than Christ’s throne—neither can we obey the lusts thereof.

Our Lord Jesus will not share His dominion even with an angel—much less with a sin. If you have iniquity enthroned in your heart you must be lost. There is no hope for you. You may have Christ and quit your sin. But you can not have Christ and hug your sin. Christ shall help you to slay your sin. But if you say, “No, but I will indulge this evil,” even though you add, “Is it not a little one?” you will perish in your iniquity. If there is one darling sin that you would spare, Christ and your soul will never agree. There can be no peace between you and Christ while there is peace between you and sin.

I have known men give up drunkenness and when they have signed the pledge they have thought, “Now I am somebody.” And they have gone on with some other habit which was quite as bad. I am glad enough to see you total abstainers. But that will not save you. Drunkards cannot enter Heaven. Neither can liars, nor thieves, nor fornicators, nor unbelievers. You have driven out one Canaanite but how about the rest? One man has said, “I cannot bear prodigality. The extravagant expenditure of that young profligate is abominable.” Just so, but is not avarice abominable also? I do not suppose that you ever would spend too much money—for

you are a mean old tightwad. You would never be tempted to waste your money—for you love it too much. Extravagance is not in your line. But you may as surely be ruined by covetousness and greed as by prodigality.

Covetousness may be a better sort of vice for *your* pocket, but it will be not better for your soul when you have to stand before the judgment bar of God. One man loathes hypocrisy but then he is cruel, hard and unforgiving. Another man will never swear but he will lie as fast as a horse will gallop. I have known a man hate lying and yet he has been given to lechery. I have known another who has been perfectly pure from fleshly sin but then he has been as proud as Lucifer himself. And pride will destroy a man as much as any other form of sin. The fact is, the whole nest of unclean birds must be thrown to the ground. All the eggs of the cockatrice must be crushed. Let us pray—

***“The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol is,
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only You.”***

Suppose that one of our missionaries were to come back from India and say, “I have achieved a great marvel among the natives. All through one of the districts I went and preached and worked wonders. I found them worshipping gods made of the mud of the Ganges. I showed them the folly of it and they broke their mud gods to pieces. And some of them had wooden gods and I induced them to burn them all. But there were some beautiful gods—gods of marble and of gold and of silver and I had not the heart to meddle with them—for they were so artistic, so valuable and so venerable. Why one of them had eyes of diamonds! And another had about his wrist a bracelet of rubies.”

Alas, Mr. Missionary! We see no reason for your self-congratulation. So you left the people worshipping those precious gods, did you? What good have you done? None whatever. It is evidently as evil an idolatry to worship a god of gold as it is to worship a god of mud. Now if we come among you and so deal with vice and improve the education and morals of the masses that we elevate the people, what have we done if we end there? We have taken away one set of sins but have left others. We have broken the mud gods but if we leave the gold and silver gods, what good have we done as before the sight of the Lord?

Many men have been delivered from the bottom rank of lusts and so far, so good. But then the higher ranks of spiritual wickedness in high places have been left untouched and what has been the net result? Something for this world but nothing for the next. Something for morality but nothing for spirituality. In the long run we shall not have done much even for morals—for the most loathsome of vices flourish side by side with great apparent refinement. Even the King of Sodom was a perfect gentleman. Many an infamously unclean person is a man honored in society because of his cultured mind. Sins of all sorts must go when Divine Grace takes possession of the soul.

Bring out the golden calf! This costly idol must be ground to powder and strewed upon the water. The golden calf is as detestable before the

Lord as the most beggarly gods of wood. One form of enmity to God is as obnoxious to His Law as another. Sin in satin is as great a rebel as sin in rags. You may wash sin in perfume but it smells none the sweeter. Remember, also, dear Fiends, that a man cannot be free from sin if he is the servant of even *one* sin., Here is a man who has a long chain on his leg—a chain of fifty links. Now suppose that I come in as a liberator and take away forty-nine links but still leave the iron fastened to the pillar and his leg in the one link which is within the iron ring—what benefit have I brought him?

How much good have I done? The man is still a captive. If you had a bird here—say, a canary—and it was all free except one leg, it would not be a free bird then, would it? “It is only held by a single bit of cotton,” you say. Still the bird is not at liberty—it cannot fly as it pleases. As long as a man is held a captive by a single vice—no matter how small it is—he is still in bondage to iniquity. If just one sin binds him, masters him—he is not the Lord’s free man. He is still a slave in the worst form of slavery—he is under the dominion of evil. Hence, you see, I spoke not too harshly, when I said, “Down with them all!” They must all be conquered, every one. Not one single sin must be allowed to occupy the love of our heart and the throne of our nature.

There are certain sins that, when we begin to war with them, we very soon overcome. These Israelites, when they were up in the mountains and in the woods soon got at the hill country Canaanites and destroyed them. But down in the plain—where there was plenty of room for horses and chariots—the Israelites were puzzled what to do. For some of these Canaanites had chariots of iron which had scythes fixed to the axles and when they drove into the ranks of an army, they mowed down the people as a reaping machine cuts down the standing corn. For a while this seems to have staggered the Israelites altogether. It was a terrible business to think about and fear exaggerated the power of the dreadful chariots.

Dread made them powerless till they, by God’s Grace, plucked up the courage. And when they once mustered up courage they found that these chariots were not nearly so terrible as they were supposed to be. There were ways of managing and mastering them—if Israel would but trust in God and play the man. When a man is converted by Divine Grace certain sins are readily overcome—they fly away at once, never to return. I hardly recollect, after talking with thousands of converts, hearing any Brother or Sister say that they found it difficult to give up swearing. I have often heard people express their wonder that though they had never, for years, used a single sentence without an oath, yet, from the moment of their conversion, no profane word ever escaped their lips.

I remember one who said, having been a profane swearer of the worst kind, that some years after his conversion a hogshead rolled on his toe and an ill word escaped him for which he was nearly broken-hearted. But that during all his life beside, since his conversion, he never remembered that such a folly and sin had come near him. Swearing is a kind of Canaanite that is soon settled off—driven out and slain. So it is with many other forms of evil. We get our sword at their throats quickly and by God’s

Grace we are clean rid of all temptation to return to them. Such sins, though once powerful, are left dead on the field of battle.

Glory be to God! Goliath's head is off. Sisera has the nail through his temple. Eglon is stabbed to the heart. The enemies of God and of our souls are dead. I know that some of you could bear testimony that your favored sins became so disgusting to you that you have never had a temptation to wander in that direction. And if a desire towards them has crossed your mind you have revolted against it and cast it away from you with indignation.

But certain other sins are much tougher to deal with. They fight back and some of them seem to have as many lives as a cat. There is no killing them. When you think that you have slain them, they are up and at you again. They may be said to have chariots of iron. These sins are sometimes those which have gained their power—their chariots of iron—through long habit. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” No, *he* never shall but the Grace of God *can*. The Grace of God has taken all the spots out of many leopards and all the black out of crowds of Ethiopians. But occasionally old, deep-seated habits come up again from their graves by a hideous resurrection.

Did you never catch yourselves with a snatch of an old song coming to your memory when you have been in prayer? When you have drawn very near to God, have you not been suddenly startled with the remembrance of a filthy thing into which you once plunged? Terrible is the power of habit which has long held sway. It is not easy to uproot the oak of many a year's growth. These habits make chariots of iron into which your sins mount and they become terrible enemies to our holy desires and fervent resolves.

Some sins get their chariots of iron from being congenial to our constitution. Certain Brothers and Sisters are sadly quick-tempered. And as long as they live they will have to be on their guard against growing suddenly angry and speaking unadvisedly. They are quick and sensitive and this might not in itself be a serious evil. But when sin wields that quickness and sensitiveness, evil comes of it. How many a sincere child of God has had to go for years groaning, as with broken bones, because of the quickness of his temper! As for these constitutional sins, you must not excuse them. I beseech you mark what I say about this—for many are ruined by supposing that their constitutional faults are hardly faults at all but unavoidable accidents.

You must not say of any sin, “I cannot help it.” You *have* to help it. You must not say, “Oh but it is natural to me.” I know that it is natural—that is the very reason why you have to be doubly on your guard against it. Everything that is of nature—yes, and of your fallen nature when it is at its best—has to be put under the feet of Christ that Divine Grace may reign over every form of evil.

Frequently the chariot of iron derives its force from the fact that a certain sin comes rushing upon you on a sudden and so takes you at a disadvantage. If a man had notice of a temptation he might be able to overcome it. But temptations never give us notice—can we expect them to do

so? The sailor does not expect to have notice of every gale of wind that blows upon him. The soldier in battle does not reckon to have notice of every bullet that is coming his way. By what apparatus could we be kept aware of every advance of the Evil One? The very essence of temptation often lies in the suddenness of it—we are carried off our feet before we are even aware of it. Yet we must not say because of this, “I cannot help it.”

For we ought to be all the more watchful and live all the nearer to God in prayer. We are bound to stand against a sudden temptation as much as against a slower mode of attack. We must look to the Lord to be preserved from the arrow which flies by day and the pestilence which walks in darkness. We are to cry to God for Divine Grace. Let the gusts of temptation come how they may and when they may—we may always be found in Christ—resting in *Him*, covered with His Divine power.

Dear Friends, sometimes these sins get power from the fact that if we do not yield to them, we may incur ridicule on account of them. Many a true Believer who could burn at the stake cannot bear to be laughed at. Many persons are remarkably sensitive to a jest or a sarcasm. They could bear to be flogged more easily than to be ridiculed. So the powers of darkness assail them with sneers and jeers and flouts and gibes. These are to them as chariots of iron. I have no doubt that our soldier friends who are about to be baptized tonight will have a hard time of it in that respect. I pray God to strengthen them in the barracks and make them like men in armor who cannot be wounded by sword or arrow.

I would not, if I could, prevent any of you from being persecuted in your measure. Should not soldiers fight? I would stay the persecution for the sake of the persecutor. But for the sake of you who have to bear it, I would hardly lift a finger to screen you because the trial is an education of the utmost value. We shall never see champions if there is no fighting. Brothers and Sisters, some of us have lived in warfare so long that we should be half afraid if we were long free from assault. We have been called pretty nearly every name—and if there remain any other forms of abuse, we are waiting for their filthiness to be poured on our head.

Yet our slanderers and revilers have not broken a single bone. They have not hurt our faith, nor blighted our hope, nor chilled our love, nor stopped our communion with God. Indeed, we are the better for the fire—the anvil and the hammer with which our enemies have been good enough to work upon us. More closeness to God, more confidence in Him—and more joy in Him often come to the child of God when he is most under fire. Still the trial of cruel mockings makes sin seem to have chariots of iron.

Perhaps one of the things that is worst of all to a Christian is that certain sins are supposed to be irresistible. It is a popular error and a very pernicious one. “These chariots of iron,” the Israelites said, “it is of no use to try to contend with them.” So they gave up the plains to the Canaanites. It is a sad calamity when a Christian person says, “I can keep straight in everything except that. Do not touch me there. You must allow me a great deal of latitude in that direction. Please make large allowances for my peculiar constitution.” All such pleading is mischievous. Listen to

me, my Sister. I will make allowances for you. But I beseech you, do not make any allowance for yourself. My Brother, I implore you, do not take out a license to sin. But for you to make an allowance for yourself will be most injurious to your soul. You have to overcome and destroy the sin for which you claim toleration.

Mark that! You must not—you dare not—allow *ANY* sin to master you! And if you know that it does overpower you, do not therefore claim that you may indulge it, but draw an inference of the opposite sort. Because it has mastered you, concentrate your entire strength upon its utter destruction. Sin must come down—let not your eyes spare it. The Canaanite must be driven out—the finest and fairest of the race must fall by the sword. We cannot enter Heaven with a single sin remaining in us, for “they are without fault before the Throne of God.” Before we can pass the pearly portal every spot and wrinkle must be removed from us. See your calling, Brethren. Look at it well. Do you not need heavenly strength? Will you not seek the Holy Spirit?

II. I now turn to the second head. I have said that we must drive them out. The second head is that **THEY CAN BE DRIVEN OUT**. I do not say that *we* can drive them out but I say that they *can* be driven out. It will be a great miracle but let us believe in it. For other great wonders have been worked. Note first that you and I have been raised from the dead. Is it not so? “You has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” If a dead man has been raised, then anything can be done with the man who is now made alive.

Do not tell me that there is a spot on the face of newly-risen Lazarus that cannot be washed away—I do not believe it. Do not tell me that there is a bent finger that cannot be straightened—after having seen the dead man live—I am certain that the living man can be perfected. He that could raise Lazarus from the dead can cause his grave clothes to be unbound, can raise him beyond his imperfections and infirmities, can make him perfect in every good work to do His will. It **CAN** be done. The raising from the dead is the evidence that it can be done.

You have also by Divine power been led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as the result of Divine Grace within your heart, what is there that you cannot do? Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is a very simple thing, you say. I know it is, but still it is the greatest thing a man ever does. “What shall we do,” they said to Jesus, “that we might work the works of God?” And He said, “This is the work of God”—this is a God-like work, the highest kind of work that ever can be done—“that you believe on Him whom He has sent.” If you have been enabled to believe you can be enabled to be holy. He that led you to exert faith can lead you, by faith, to overcome any and every iniquity.

In the next place, you have already conquered many sins. Look at the heaps of Canaanites that you have killed. Begin at the beginning, where God began with you in the work of Grace in your soul—is there not a wonderful difference between what you were then and what you are now? Were there not sins entrenched in your nature, like the Canaanites in

their walled cities? But Jericho fell flat to the ground. Hosts upon hosts of unbelief and iniquities dwelt within your daily life but you have driven them out. *By God's Grace* you have resisted temptation and escaped from lusts and risen above doubts. You have overcome through the blood of the Lamb. You can say, "O my soul, you have trod down strength." He that has helped you so far can surely help you even to the conclusion of the fight. Do not doubt that the almighty power of Divine Grace which has achieved so much, can achieve much more. Be strong and very courageous—the Lord of Hosts, Himself is at your side.

Have you not seen other Christians conquer? Oh, let your memory charge you now with Brothers and Sisters in whom you saw great infirmities and sins at the commencement of their spiritual career. How they have grown! How they have vanquished inbred sin! The tears come into my eyes when I think of certain members of this Church—some in Heaven and some still among us. I remember what they used to be and what they are now and I can hardly believe that they are the same persons. Fierce tempers have been tamed, strong passions have been bound, black melancholy has been chased away. When they first joined the Church they were good, useful, sound men but the pear was very hard.

I should not have liked to put my teeth into it—they were stern, self-willed and obstinate. The fruit was not only hard but sour—for with all their zeal they were tart, sharp and the reverse of gentle. But now, how mellow they are! What a sweet smell of ripeness there is about them! How ready they are to be taken to the great feast above! What God has done for them He can do for you. He can get that hardness out of you. That greenness, that sourness—He can graciously remove. Every man among us has to wear out at least one pair of green slippers. And when he has worn them out—then he puts on something better by way of traveling gear and has his feet "shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." We generally begin with a fool's boots at first, but God, who makes the foolish wise, makes men of us at last. He who trains the babes till out of their mouths He brings forth mighty witness to His Word can do the same with us.

Beloved, we have been talking about what *can be done* and what *cannot* be done. Have we thought about it? We are dealing with the Almighty. And with Him all things are possible. I think I see the battle now going on. The enemy seems to prevail and the timid hearts of the soldiers of the Cross sink within them. Listen! You have not yet drawn upon your reserves. Do you not know that there is eternal power within the Godhead waiting to help you in your struggle against all evil? Call up your reserves! Entreat your great Ally to send reinforcements in this hour of need. Beseech the Lord to give you more Divine Grace. And as you have received life at His hands, pray that you may receive it yet more abundantly.

Does any man know how holy he can be? "It does not yet appear what we shall be." God give us grace to pray and watch and believe and expect—and may the prayer of my dear Brother Williams be fully answered, for he just now prayed that "the weakest among us may be as David and David as the angel of God." God help us to feel that the Canaanites can be driven out.

III. And then we close with our third head and that is, **THEY SHALL BE DRIVEN OUT.** They *must* be driven out. They *can* be driven out. They *shall* be driven out. They *shall* be driven out. That is a speech for a monarch. “Must” is for the king and “shall” is for the King of kings.

Well, well—we venture to say it—because we only give the echo of His sovereign tones. This is what Christ died for. He loved the Church and gave Himself for it that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the Word—that He might present it unto Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing—but that it should be holy and without blemish. Christ died to save His people, not from *some* of their sins but from *all* of their sins. His precious blood cleans from all sin. His perfect atonement secures perfection to His saints. The death of sin is *guaranteed* by the death of Christ. Let us pray tonight fervently—

**“Let the water and the blood,
From Your riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure
Cleanse us from its guilt and power.”**

Brethren, this is what Christ lives for. Up in Heaven He pleads for us and “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” The desire of His heart is that we may be kept from sin. “Holy Father, keep them through Your Word.” He pleads that though Satan may desire to have them and sift them as wheat they still may be preserved. Christ in Heaven is the pattern of what we shall be and He will not fail to mold us after His own model. We shall one day be perfectly conformed to His image and then we shall be with Him in glory. Our Lord’s honor is bound up with the presentation of all His saints in spotless purity to Himself in the day of His glorious marriage.

This is what the Holy Spirit is given for. He is not given to come into our hearts and comfort us *in our sins* but to deliver us from all evil and to comfort us in Christ Jesus. He quickens, He directs, He helps, He illuminates. He does a thousand things. But, chiefly, He *sanctifies* us. He comes into the heart to drive out every other power that seeks to have dominion there. By the living Spirit of God, who dwells in you, as God within His temple, I charge you cry to Him that every Dagon may be broken, every altar of Baal cast down, every golden calf ground to powder.

O Brothers and Sisters, let us never from this time forth write out a pass for any sin to come and go in our hearts. We will have no licensed sin, no place in which evil may claim a lodging. We will not have a spare bed for iniquity, nor give it a room, even in the barn or the outhouse. Do not let us idly say, “I cannot get over that sinful habit.” You **CAN** get over it—you **MUST** get over it. Do not say, “I will draw the line there. I really must tolerate that one particular fault.” Do not tolerate it! It will ruin you. How dare you say, “I must drink so much poison.” Touch it not. Oh, that the poison of iniquity may never come near your lips, however sweet it may seem to the carnal taste!

This is the very object of the Gospel which we preach to you. And we have preached in vain unless you are striving against sin. Ours is a holy Gospel and if it does not make you holy, it has done nothing for you. This, especially, is the meaning of the ordinance of Baptism for which the pool is now open before you. It is one of the meanings of Believer's Baptism that you are henceforth buried with Christ—dead to your old sins and risen with Christ in newness of life. What a farce it is if you are still living in sin! I shall thank God that I baptized none of you if I see you still alive unto sin as you used to be. If you and I are unholy, we stab religion in its vital parts and murder our profession. When we make up our minds that we will allow any sin within us, we do to that extent deny to Christ the travail of His soul. Nothing grieves the Spirit of God like unholiness. And nothing pleases Christ like seeing His disciples walking in His footsteps.

I wish that I were able to speak more instructively upon such a subject as this. But I speak to myself and I feel the effect of the Truth of God as I utter it. I pray that I may speak to all here present with practical result. I doubt not that I address many dear Brethren who are far in advance of myself and to them I say, "Go on, dear Friends, from strength to strength. And may the Lord help you to tread all the powers of darkness down and win the day speedily." But I speak to others that are far behind me. And I am sorry that they are so—for I am very far from having attained—although I press forward with all my heart.

If you are living children of the living God, lay hold upon that promise, "By little and by little, I will surely drive them out." If you cannot conquer all the Hivites and Jebusites today—at least down with one and then with another. May the mighty Grace of God—without which you can do nothing—help you to keep your sword out of its sheath, driving at the very heart of sin with your utmost strength until the last sin shall lie dead at the feet of Christ and you shall be perfectly happy because He has made you perfectly holy.

There is no fear of your stopping here upon this sin-deified earth if you have once reached the point of perfection. This is a poor world for the completely sanctified. God does not leave His ripe wheat out in the fields too long—He takes the sheaves home to His barn when they are quite ready. We shall soon be with Him where He is when we are made like He. The Lord grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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

GATHERING WITHOUT PLANTING

NO. 3248

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 4, 1911.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 26, 1879.

“You eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.”
Joshua 24:13.

[Other “Olive” Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon are as follows—#1569, Volume 26—THE GOLDEN LAMP AND ITS GOODLY LESSONS; #3176, Volume 55—THE BEAUTY OF THE OLIVE TREE; #3175, Volume 55—“PEACE! PERFECT PEACE!”; #3190, Volume 56—CHRIST IN GETHSEMANE; #3208, Volume 56—THE FAITHFUL TREE and #3226, Volume 56—FIGS AND OLIVES—
Read/download all these sermons free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

THE Israelites, when they came into Canaan, entered into possession of a country which was thoroughly prepared for their occupation. There were walled cities and houses exactly adapted for their use and in habitable repair. The vineyards were in full bearing and the hills terraced ready for cultivation. They were not like emigrants to the wild west who have to clear forests and turn over prairies! They had not even to take possession of ruined cities and to rebuild them! For the most part, everything stood waiting for them, “houses full of all good things,” and even “the old corn of the land” stored up for their immediate use! Moses had promised them that it would be so and Joshua reminded them of the promise when it had become a fact.

As the Holy Spirit shall help us, *let us first learn from the text as it referred to Israel.* And then, taking the general principle here mentioned, *let us learn from their case to consider our own,* for we also enjoy that which we have neither produced nor earned.

I. First, then, LET US LEARN FROM THE TEXT AS IT REFERRED TO ISRAEL. They entered into possession of wells which they had not dug, cities which they had not built, olive trees and vineyards which they had not planted.

In the first place, *this was a fulfillment of the ancient Covenant.* Although all the details of these blessings to Israel were not mentioned in the Covenant made with Abraham, yet they were virtually included—and Moses mentioned them very particularly in the 6th Chapter of Deuteronomy when he told the people to beware lest they should forget the Lord who brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. So that every time an Israelite walked out into his olive garden and especially when he beat the tree to bring down its fruit, he could say to himself, “Here is the fulfillment of the promise made to our fathers.” If he

was a truly devout Jew, he would never gather the grapes from his vineyard, nor drink of the milk, nor taste the honey which abounded in the land without recognizing that as the Lord had spoken, so the Lord had done! Jehovah had not fallen short of His promise in any respect—He had brought His people into just such a country as He had aforetime covenanted to bestow upon them!

Now, Beloved, are not we also in very much the same position as Israel was with regard to many things around us? Why, even in temporals it is so! No good thing have we lacked, though we have sometimes feared that we would. As our days, our strength has been—and we can truly say that the Lord has been mindful of His Covenant and that not one of His promises has failed. This is especially the case as we recollect the answers God has given to our prayers. He long ago gave the promise, “Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” And I, for one, have proved its truthfulness and desire to bear my testimony to the faithfulness of the Covenant-keeping God! Cannot you do the same, dear Friends? Why, I think you can hardly go into any room in your house—you cannot go to your beds, you cannot sit down at the table, you cannot walk along the street and I know that many of you cannot come to your pews in this place without thinking—“Here are the tokens of my Lord’s faithfulness, goodness and truth!” You who have lived to see 60 or 70 summers have witnessed great varieties of weather, but you can bear your testimony that according to God’s Covenant, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night have not ceased! The outside world is hung with testimonies to the faithfulness of God—

“His Covenant with the earth He keeps!

My tongue, His goodness sing.

Summer and Winter know their time,

His harvest crowns the Spring.”

But, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, when we come to think of what the Lord has done within us, can we look anywhere in our hearts, or to any faculty of our minds without perceiving evidences that the Lord is keeping His Covenant? He said, “A new heart also will I give you”—has He not given it to us? What is that heart that sorrows over conscious imperfection—what is that heart that longs after fellowship with God—what is it but that new heart that He has given to us? The Lord also said, “A new spirit will I put within you”—and what is that spirit of adoption whereby we cry, “Abba, Father”? What is that spirit which exults with delight in the Presence of God but that new spirit which He has put within us? Has He not kept His promise? Has He not given to us a sense of pardon, a consciousness of justification through faith in His dear Son? All the work of the Holy Spirit within the heart, if I were to speak upon it in detail, would only be a testimony that the Lord keeps the Covenant of His Grace which He made with us in the Person of Jesus Christ, His Son, even as He kept with Israel that ancient Covenant which He made with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob—

***“Firm as the lasting hills,
This Covenant shall endure,
Whose potent shalls and wills
Make every blessing sure!
When ruin shakes all Nature’s frame,
Its jots and tittles stand the same.”***

But, secondly, *these blessings were to Israel pledges of all the rest of the Words of God.* In that 6th Chapter of Deuteronomy where Moses speaks of the people having houses full of all good things which they did not fill, and wells which they did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees which they did not plant, he also commanded them to keep the Words of the Lord in their hearts, to teach them to their children, to talk of them as they sat in the house or walked by the way, to bind them upon their hands and as frontlets between their eyes and to write them upon the posts and gates of their houses. Do you see what was the drift of the argument of Moses? Was it not just this—If God’s Words of promise have been so rich and so weighty that they have brought Israel into the possession of the land flowing with milk and honey, should not Israel now guard most jealously *all* the Words of God? I know how the children of God learn to prize His promises. Their soul has lived by the month together upon a single promise, and it has been enough to feast their spirits. In another time of distress they have rested upon another promise and in this way, through their experience, the promises have become exceedingly precious to them!

This kind of experience should teach us the preciousness of the Word of God as a whole so that we would not part with a single letter of it and would not give up even the dot of an i or the cross of a t! I always deprecate the spirit which tries to tamper with the Word of God. I admire them who have sufficient knowledge of the ancient manuscripts of the Scriptures to tell us, as nearly as they can ascertain them, what were the original Hebrew and Greek words, but I dearly deplore that kind of spirit which, after the style of a destructive parrot, seeks to tear the Scriptures to pieces and to rob the children of God of their priceless possession! Why, even a solitary Divine precept is so precious that if all the saints in the world were burnt at one stake for the defense of it—it would be well worth the holocaust! If the whole of us went to prison and to death for the preservation of a single sentence of Scripture, we would be fully justified in making such a sacrifice. If I were to ask some of the broad school of the present day whether there is any Doctrine in the Bible that would justify a person in being a martyr for it, I believe they would be compelled to answer, “No. The whole thing is a mere matter of opinion to us.” But it is not a matter of opinion to us! The Word of God is to us an Infallible Revelation of the Eternal Truth of God and that part of it which has already been proved to be true to us is the seal and pledge that the whole of it is true and precious! When the Israelite walked in the olive groves and vineyard that he had not, himself, planted—and when he ate the

olives and grapes, he would see in them pledges that all the Words of God would be fulfilled as surely as that one promise had been!

Thirdly, these people, in entering into possession of vineyards and olive groves which they had not planted, must naturally have regarded them as *reminders of God's judgments upon sin.* "I sit under this olive tree," mused the devout Israelite, "and I eat of its fruit. I walk in this vineyard, gather the grapes and eat them. I did not plant these trees and vines, yet they are mine—how came I by them? Where are their original owners? They were slain by Joshua at the command of God because of the shameful abominations with which they filled the land." And the lesson that a gracious man would learn from this would be, "I must, therefore, cleave closely to the one living and true God and must not set up idols in His place. And I must diligently seek to know His will and to do it, so that I may not offend the great Jehovah whose wrath is so terrible against evil of every kind."

There is something, dear Friends, in your position and mine, which is analogous to this. We live in a land of many privileges, yet we must not forget that other inhabitants were here before us—and that druidic and other abominations were swept away! And even since we have flourished as a nation, other nations have been destroyed. Let them be warnings to us and let us not continue to grieve the Most High by national sins which might well bring down upon us the righteous judgments of God! Especially do we need to be on our guard against the Popery that is seeking again to enslave and degrade this fair land of ours—and at all costs to defend that faith for which our forefathers suffered and died!

Then, next, these vineyards and olive groves, possessed by those who had not planted them, were *claims upon them for service.* They were commanded by Moses to love with all their heart, and soul, and might that God who had given them the land flowing with milk and honey and all the blessings that they found in it. All He asked of them was that they should worship Him, alone, dedicate to Him the tenth of all their substance and seek to make the whole land to be holiness unto the Lord. Because He had brought them up out of Egypt and settled them in Canaan, they were bound to be His faithful servants. And, Beloved, how many voices are calling upon us who have been spiritually brought up out of Egypt into the place of Covenant privileges to serve the living God! Let others serve whomever they will—we are bound to the Lord by the cords of a man and the bands of love! If you, my Brother, forsook the service of the Most High, whose service could you enter? Where could you find a king or prince worthy of your homage and devotion? There are some of us here to whom it is our very life to serve our God! His love has won us and will hold us fast forever! If the Israelite, sitting under his olives and vines, felt that He was so deeply indebted to God that He must serve Him, much more should you and I, sitting under the Tree of Life which bears all manner of fruits, feel that we are not our own, but are bought with a price and that, therefore, we will henceforth serve Him

who has given to us such priceless blessings! Do you not feel thus, Beloved? I trust that the Holy Spirit will press this Truth of God home upon your hearts that it may be worked out in your lives.

II. Now, having spoken thus concerning the children of Israel, and somewhat also concerning ourselves, I want to bring out THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE AND ITS LESSONS FOR OURSELVES.

First as the Israelites ate the fruit of the tree which they had not planted, *we have many similar blessings which impose corresponding obligations upon us.* It would be impossible for me to go over the full list of the things which we have which are like cities which we did not build, like houses which we did not furnish, like trees which we did not plant and garden plots which we did not till. The great hulk of the things that we have—and certainly all the best things—are pure gifts of God's Grace bestowed upon us freely out of the goodness and love of His heart!

In the very forefront we must put the great blessings of the Covenant. We had nothing to do with our own election unto Eternal Life. He who chose us, chose us according to His own good pleasure. He knows why He chose us, but that reason is not known to us and certainly cannot be found in ourselves! I never met with anybody who ever thought that he deserved to be chosen unto salvation—the very fact of the choice proves that it must have been all of Grace. Then as to the blessed redemption which is in Christ Jesus, we have been washed in a Fountain that we never filled and we are this day clothed in a righteousness that we did not weave! No, we did not even arrange one thread of that spotless robe! The blood and righteousness of Christ become ours purely by an act of His Grace. It would be a most monstrous thing for anybody to say that he deserved that Christ should die for him—such a Sacrifice as He offered on Calvary's Cross must have been one of pure unmingled Grace! It would be a mistake in language, a contradiction in thought even to *suggest* that there was some measure of deserving about any of those sinners for whom Christ died! Oh, no! This good olive tree is one that we did not plant! This vine is of the Lord's own right-hand planting—and the oil and the wine that flow from them are the gifts of God's Grace! What I have said about election and redemption applies equally to adoption, sanctification and all the other blessings of the Covenant. These are fruits from a tree that we did not plant—God has given them to us freely of His Grace.

This general principle also applies very specially to *the record of these priceless gifts of Grace*, that Book of God which has been well called, "the God of books." Every leaf of that Book is of more value than a bank-note for millions of pounds! Every line is more precious than diamonds and every letter is worth more than the costliest gems. You know well enough, dear Friends, that you and I never wrote even a single letter of that blessed record—it is as much as we can do to understand it—and even that is not possible without the teaching of the Holy Spirit! We can

scarcely calculate how much we owe to those “holy men of old” who, under the Spirit’s guidance, planted this vineyard from which we are continually gathering such rich clusters! Think, too, how much we are indebted, under God, to those who were the means of preserving this record and handing it down to us, often at the cost of their own lives. Every page of this Bible is, as it were, splattered with the blood of the martyrs, yet we have not had to pay that price for it—we draw the life-giving water out of wells that we did not dig and eat the fruit of the sacred tree that we did not plant!

Then, Beloved, think of the ministry of the Word by which the Scriptures are opened up to us. How is it that we have the Gospel preached today in this land without let or hindrance? We owe it largely to the humble men and women, tailors, weavers and the like, yes, and to faithful ministers and even bishops who would not give up the Truth of God in the dark days of our country’s past history. That “candle” of which brave Hugh Latimer spoke to Bishop Ridley is still alight in England, but we did not light it, nor have we had to suffer as they and thousands of others did to keep it alight! We scarcely realize how much we owe to those true heroes of the faith of whom Foxe tells us in his martyrology, and to the many others whose names are unknown to us—and whose praises are unsung by men! When we talk of our open Bible, and of this free England of ours, and when we observe the ordinances of our holy religion as they were instituted by Christ, Himself, let us never forget that these are like the vineyards and olive groves of Canaan which the Israelites did not plant, but of which they enjoyed the fruit!

Think, also, how much we owe to those who struggled and suffered to obtain for us the civil and religious liberty which is our heritage today. There are some of our old sanctuaries still standing where our godly ancestors met to worship God five miles away from the nearest market town lest their minister should be fined or imprisoned for daring to speak publicly in God’s name! Whenever I visit such places, the tears come into my eyes as I think of those good men still standing fast in poverty and disgrace—and proclaiming that Gospel which they have handed down to us! In the gracious Providence of God, we enjoy liberty which I fear we do not value half as much as we ought. So, tonight, as we sit in these olive groves and vineyards which we did not plant, and as we eat the comforting and refreshing fruit, let us bless the Lord for the happy lot which has been so graciously prepared for us!

I have thus mentioned a few of the many blessings that make up our goodly heritage. And you can, each one, apply the general principle to your own case. I need, in closing, to remind you *of the obligations imposed upon us by these blessings which have been provided for us*. I think that our first obligation is to humility. What have you there, worthy Israelite? “A good crop of olives.” But how did you get those olive trees? You certainly did not plant them and you did not build that fine house, nor lay out the vines that are growing all round it. Oh, no! You drove out

the old owner and God gave it to you for your own possession! You are living in a city that is enclosed by solid walls composed of massive stones, but you did not build it—you would not even know how to move the stones and set them so firmly one upon another. Ah, there were giants or giant-like men in those old days who did all that for you—and you are now virtually living in an almshouse which the great God of Canaan had allowed others to fit up for your reception!

And that is very much the condition of every one of us. As for myself, I am a gentleman commoner dependent upon the daily bounty of God—and I suspect that most of you who are now present are in a similar position. Whenever we begin to grow proud because we are getting on in the world, how foolish we are—and the proudest man is the biggest fool! We are all fools when we are proud at all—and as we increase in pride, we increase in folly. Have you, my Friend, ten talents entrusted to you? What an anxiety it must be to you to use them aright for your Master! I am almost sorry for you that you have such a responsibility. Yet you are proud of it—then I am still more sorry for you. There is nothing to be proud of in being in debt—and you are in debt to your Lord for those ten talents, for He only lent them to you and He will expect to receive from you an account of how you have put them out to interest on His behalf! The more we have, the more we are indebted to God—so, in proportion as His mercy to us rises, let us sink in our own esteem and lie at His feet in adoring humility!

Our next obligation is to gratitude. When the Israelites came out of Egypt, they brought very little with them. A miracle was continually being worked so that their clothes waxed not old during their long wandering in the wilderness. Their food dropped daily from Heaven and water to quench their thirst poured out from the smitten Rock—they were a company of paupers grandly sustained by their God! And when they entered into possession of the promised land, where were their title-deeds? They could not trace their ownership through a long line of ancestors, but every conveyance contained just one sentence, “The Lord your God gave you this land.” They owed everything to the goodness of God and, therefore, they were bound to be grateful to Him! And we who realize that every good thing that we have received has come to us by the free favor of our God, are bound to be grateful to Him. I hope we are in a measure grateful to Him, but when we contrast our gratitude with the blessings which God has given us, we thank Him for what we feel, but we mourn that there is so little of it. May He give us Grace to feel far more grateful than we have ever yet been!—

***“Oh let my house a temple be,
That I and mine may sing
Hosanna to God’s majesty,
And praise our heavenly King!”***

Our next obligation is to faithfulness. When a man receives an inheritance to which he has contributed nothing whatever, he is at least bound

to keep up the estate. I have already reminded you that we have come into the possession of a Bible that we did not write, a Gospel that we could never have invented and the ministration of the Word has been maintained in this land by those who have gone before us, so that we have come into this glorious inheritance like the heirs to a family estate! Now, the very least thing that we can do is to keep up the estate. Others died to preserve it intact for us, so let us not allow it to suffer as long as we have the care of it. If I had been one of the Israelites in Canaan, I think I would have said to myself, "I will keep this place with the utmost care, so that it shall not be injured while it is in my charge. I have only a life interest in it, so I will pass it on to my successor in as good a condition as when I entered into possession of it." So, Beloved, let not the Gospel suffer any loss by you. The Church of God is put in trust with it, so let not future generations have to say concerning this period in which we are living, "There was a sad degeneration at that particular time. Christians were not steadfast, then—they trifled with Truth of God—they wanted something new. Worldlings called them fools and they began to think they were. They ran after this philosophy and that, and left the grand old Gospel of the Grace of God, or adulterated it with the so-called wisdom of men, which is foolishness in the sight of God." I pray that this may not be the case, but that God will raise up a great host of those who will maintain the Truth, unsullied, and hand it down to posterity uninjured. You did not plant the vines and olive trees, so do not cut them down! You did not dig the well from which you are drawing water, so do not let anybody fill it up. Be faithful to God at all times—contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints—and let it never suffer at your hands.

There is also our obligation of service to coming generations. Who planted those vines and olive trees? Those who came before us. Then let us plant more for those who will come after us. Other people maintained the Truth in years gone by and taught it to their children—and their children taught it to us—so let us teach it to our children that in due course they may also teach it to their children! We do not believe in oral tradition as an authority in the Church of God, but we do believe in *oral instruction* as a most important agency in propagating the Truth of God. Books are too often left unread—we need living men to speak the Living Word! Do not any of you imagine because your children can get good books, that you are exonerated from speaking to them personally about their souls! Mother, you are the best instructor that your child can have. Father, your loving, gracious talk with your boy will have more effect upon him than any book you can give him. Even the Bible itself he may leave unread when he leaves home—but if you have spoken earnestly and affectionately to him and prayed with him while he was under your roof, he will not be able to forget that! The teaching of the children is the very bulwark of Christianity and Protestantism—and the teaching should be given to them by their own parents if they are Christians, or in our Sunday schools and Ragged schools if the parents are not themselves

qualified to give it. Why, if we neglect the rising generation, surely our fathers' blessings upon us will curdle into curses! They taught us and prayed with us—and their parents taught them and prayed with them—and therefore there is a godly seed still in the land!

So shall we now neglect to train our own children, or shall our Sunday schools lack teachers, as is so often the case? I pray that it may not be so with you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ. In whatever part of London or anywhere else that you dwell, search out the schools where teachers are needed and offer your services. I speak especially to you who have ripe experience, for it is not right that this important service should be left to boys and girls. God bless the young people who are doing their part of the work so well—but why should not middle life with its vigor, and even old age with its sweetness and maturity, be found in the Sunday school? We have inherited from our ancestry what we are bound to pass on to our posterity! If I could, I would be a blessing to all succeeding ages as well as to the one in which I am living. So, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, do all the good you can while you live—and leave a gracious memory behind you when you are no longer here. Plant as many vines and olive trees as you can, for though you may not be spared to gather the fruit from them, somebody will reap the benefit when you have been called to higher service! I like that kind of benevolence which does not always ask to see those whom it blesses, but which finds satisfaction in doing good simply for the Glory of God. Try to be disinterested—do not say, “I must see something for my money.” Oh, no, no! Your wondrous inheritance of innumerable blessings, for which you never toiled, came to you from the unseen source of Divine, Eternal Beneficence, so seek to catch something of that same spirit by building cities, digging wells, furnishing houses and planting vineyards and olive groves for those whom you will never see until, by Grace, you meet them in the general assembly and Church of the First-Born in your Father's House on high!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 PETER 1:9-21.**

[This is concluded from Sermon #3245, Volume 57—OUR POSITION AND OUR PURPOSE—
Read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

9. *But he that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off.* He is short-sighted. He has some light, and some physical sight, but he cannot see at a distance. Spiritually, he is blind.

9. *And has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.* It is a great mercy not merely to see men as trees walking, but to have clear spiritual vision. There is a great deal of dust that gets into our eyes—and there is no way of clearing out that dust and becoming long-sighted, getting a sight that can see to Heaven—except by getting that spiritual life which

manifests itself in faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love.

10. *Therefore, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things you shall never fall.* This is the second time that Peter writes about giving diligence. We are told not to be slothful in business and this matter of which Peter write is the most important of all business! To prosper in this world may bring some advantages, but to prosper in heavenly things is infinitely better! “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure”—that you may be sure of it and that others may be sure of it, too. Let it not continue a subject of question with you, “Am I the Lord’s, or am I not? Am I called by Grace, am I chosen by God, or am I not?” Make these things sure beyond all doubt!

11. *For so an entrance shall be supplied unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* [See Sermon #123, Volume 3—PARTICULAR ELECTION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] You shall get far into the Kingdom—you shall know the innermost joys of it! You shall get near the King and you shall become like the King—and when you come to die, you shall not be tugged into the harbor like a dismantled, water-logged vessel, but you shall go in like a full-rigged ship with all sails set! And so you shall have an abundant entrance into the fair haven of Eternal Happiness. May God grant us this unspeakable blessedness, so that we shall not “be saved, yet so as by fire” but that we shall find our Heaven begun below—and go from Heaven below to Heaven above scarcely knowing any change at all! There have been saints who have found the stream of Christ’s love running so strongly and carrying them down to the great ocean of Eternal Life, that they have scarcely known where the river and the ocean have met!

12. *Therefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things.* He who exhorts others to be diligent must not himself be negligent. And Peter most appropriately writes, “Therefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things.”

12. *Though you know them, and are established in the present truth.* We need to preach the Truth of God continually, for even those who know it need to be reminded of it again and again. Truth unpublished is like seed laid up in a florist’s shop—it does not produce any result. We need to have the Truth constantly sown in our hearts and watered by the Holy Spirit that it may grow and bring forth fruit.

13. *Yes, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.* When people are as they should be, it is worthwhile to stir them up. You do not want to stir up dirty water, but you may stir that which is pure and sweet as much as you like. And a good fire sometimes becomes a better one by a little stirring up.

14. *Knowing that shortly I must put off this, my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me.* The Lord had told Peter how he was to die. He had told him that he would die by crucifixion—“When you shall

be old, you shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you and carry you where you would not.” He knew that the day of his martyrdom was approaching and so, being Divinely warned, he was the more earnest to preach as a dying man to dying men! I have sometimes heard, as a criticism of that expression of Baxter’s about a dying man preaching to dying men, the remark that it would be better as living men, to preach to living men. It is quite true that we must throw all our life into our preaching, but, as a rule, living men are never more truly alive than when they are under a due sense that they are also dying men! When we realize that eternity is very near us and we are consciously drawing near to the Great Judgment Seat of Christ, than all our faculties are fully awakened and our whole being is bent on doing the Master’s work with the utmost vigor and earnestness!

15. *Moreover I will endeavor that you may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance.* When we are gone from the earth, we want the Truth of God that we have spoken to live on after us. We want, even from our graves, to continue to speak for Christ. Therefore it was that Peter kept on repeating the same Truth over and over again. He hit this nail on the head many times and sought to clinch it—so that when he was gone, it would not move from its place, but would remain firmly fixed.

16. *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables.* He had no retractions to make as he came towards the close of his ministry. He did not have to say that, after all, he had been greatly mistaken—there had been an advance in theology since Jesus Christ had died and he was sorry to say that he had preached a good deal when he was young which he would like to unsay now that he was old. Oh, no! Peter held fast to what he had previously preached because he knew that it was the very Truth of God! And the other Apostles had done the same, so that Peter could write, “We have not followed cunningly devised fables”—

16. *When we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.* Peter was one of the three who saw the Lord Jesus Christ in His Glory upon the Mount of Transfiguration—and he recalls this.

17, 18. *For He received from God the Father, honor and Glory when there came such a Voice to Him from the excellent Glory, this is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this Voice which came from Heaven, we heard, when we were with Him on the holy mount.* Peter was not deceived about that matter! At the time, he and his fellow Apostles had been overcome by the too-transporting sight, but they all knew that it was no vision, or dream, or delusion, so Peter here speaks very positively concerning it. Why can we not receive the testimony of true witnesses such as Peter and the other Apostles who sealed with their life’s blood the witness which they bore to their Lord and His Truth?

19. *We have also a more sure Word of prophecy.* Can anything be more sure than that which an eyewitness sees? Well, Peter says that this prophetic Book, in which Holy Scripture is stored up is better to us than if we had even seen Christ Himself! If any one thing is more sure than another, it is this blessed book—the Revelation of the Christ of God!

19, 20. *Whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the day star arises in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.* It is not to be kept by any man to himself. God spoke to Jacob at Bethel and we read concerning it, in Hosea 12:4, “there He spoke with us.” With regard to the children of Israel rejoicing at the Red Sea, we read, in the 66th Psalm, “There did *we* rejoice in Him.” The promises God made to this believing man or that, He makes to all believing men! You remember that text, “He has said I will never leave you, nor forsake you”? That promise was first of all spoken to Joshua, yet Paul quoted it in writing the Epistle to the Hebrews, as if it was spoken to every Believer—and so, indeed, it is! No Apostle, no Prophet could hedge up a promise and say, “This was mine and nobody else’s.” It is a common heritage of all the saints! Every promise is within the boundary of the Covenant of Grace, and all who are in that Covenant are heirs of all the promises, to whomever they were made!

21. *For prophecy never came by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.* This is the foundation of our faith—that this Book is Divinely Inspired! Allow nobody to make you doubt concerning this matter, for you must give up Christianity, itself, if you give up the Inspiration of this Book! You have nothing else to fall back upon but this Book—and your own personal verification of it by the work of the Holy Spirit in your own soul! To tamper with Inspiration is to tamper with the heart of true religion! *The least doubt upon that matter is fatal.* I mean what I say and I know how desperately this mischief is working in these days in which we live. Men used to say, with the famous Chillingworth, “The Bible and the Bible, alone, is the religion of Protestants.” And so it once was. Yet now it seems to me that anything *but* the Bible is coming to be their religion but, as for us, we accept as authoritative nothing that contradicts these Truths of God which are written in this Book! We mean to stand fast by these Truths, God helping us. We can do no other, come what may in this evil age. “Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

—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.**

DECISION—ILLUSTRATED BY THE CASE OF JOSHUA NO. 1229

**A SERMON DELIVERED OF LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 18, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”
Joshua 24:15.*

JOSHUA knew that the people who surrounded him, while ostensibly serving Jehovah, were, many of them, secretly worshipping the ancient idols of their Mesopotamian fathers—those seraphim which were once hidden in Rachel's tent and were never quite purged from Jacob's family. Some of them, also, harbored the Egyptian emblems. And some had even fallen into the worship of the gods of the people whom they had displaced and were setting up the images of Baalim in their homes. The people were nominally worshippers of Jehovah, but in reality, many of them had turned aside unto strange gods. Never in their best days had the children of Israel been quite divorced from idols, for, as Stephen said of them, even in the wilderness they took up the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of their god Remphan, figures which they *made*, to worship.

Now, being a thorough-going, decided, down-right man, Joshua could not endure double-mindedness and, therefore, he pushed the people to decision, urging them to serve the Lord with sincerity and, if they did so, to put away, altogether, all their graven images. He demanded from them a determination for one thing or the other, and cried, “If it seems evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites among whom you dwell.” He shut them up to a present choice between the true God and the idols and gave them no rest in their half-heartedness. Anticipating the cry of Elijah upon Carmel, he demanded, in effect, “How long halt you between two opinions? If God is God, serve Him, but if Baal is God, serve him.” He demanded a decision and rightly so.

Can either earth or Heaven be quiet while such a matter is in suspense? To compel them to assert their decision, he declared his own. A man's own personal example is eloquent beyond the power of words. Hear the grand old man! He cries, “You may hesitate, but my mind is made up once and for all. Judge you as you will, my verdict is already given and my children agree with me—as for me and my house we will serve Jehovah. We have no reverence for the demons of Canaan or the myths of Egypt who could not preserve their own worshippers—our hearts are loyal to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who brought us up out of Egypt and gave us this land for an heritage. So far as myself and my sons and my

daughters are concerned, the die is cast and Jehovah, alone, will we serve.”

This clear avowal on the part of Joshua was not a trick of eloquence or a resolve made, for the first time, in order to influence his audience—he had so lived that his declaration carried weight with all who heard it, else it had been idle to have uttered it. He had always been a man of firm steps and determined mind. Probably this was one reason why Moses chose him to be his servant and kept him in personal attendance upon himself. His firmness comes out very clearly in his conduct as one of the 12 spies. The others brought up an evil report of the land, but not so Joshua and Caleb! Though they were only two against 10, yet they boldly maintained their testimony! And when the people spoke of stoning them, they did not falter for an instant, but remained faithful to their consciences.

These two men, alone, survived the graves of the wilderness, because they, alone, were untainted with the wilderness sins. Take Joshua as a warrior, too, for he was called to fight the Lord’s battles and you find him always a good soldier of the Lord. What a soldier he was! Saul, in later times, might spare the condemned seed of Amalek, but not so Joshua! As long as Moses held up his hands to pray, the sword of Joshua stayed not in the work of execution. When Israel had crossed the Jordan to attack the Canaanites, he had a commission from the Lord to destroy these outlawed nations and he made thorough work of it! So zealous was he in this war that the day was not long enough for him—he bade the sun and moon stand still till the Lord’s battle was fought to the end!

Joshua, like his friend, Caleb, “followed the Lord fully.” He might have taken for his motto the word, “*thorough*.” He belonged to Jehovah, heart and soul, and mind and strength. As the successor of Moses and the type of the Lord Jesus, he put on zeal as a cloak and girded himself with fidelity as a garment. His appointed duty was fulfilled with martial strictness and unswerving steadiness. He had a single eye and a firm hand. He was strong and of good courage—and the Lord was with him. It was no idle boast when the old warrior and prince in Israel said, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

We admire fidelity in Joshua and we confess that he needed it. But we may, perhaps, forget that there was never an age in which a decision for God was not equally required. It is well to admire this in another, but it is far better to possess it ourselves! In all times it is imperative upon men to take their stand for God and His Truth. In the first household outside of Eden, Abel protested against his elder brother’s example and died in consequence. Enoch, when all around walked according to the course of this world, dared to be singular and walked with God. Noah believed God amid universal wickedness and persevered for long years in preparing the Ark, though all men mocked his warnings. Abraham forsook country and home, at the command of God, and became a pilgrim and a stranger, dwelling alone and not numbered among the peoples. His was a grand life, for decided faith made him not only a mighty man, but a king among Patriarchs.

Each age had its man whose heart was fixed, trusting in the Lord to serve as a landmark for weaker saints to steer by, and a rock against which the tumult of the people raged in vain. Look at Moses, counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt, exciting a sluggish race to action, facing the tyrant king and leading Israel into the wilderness! What a princely soul Divine Grace made him! How firmly did he adhere to right and the Truth of God so that he was faithful to God in all his years. Pass along through the Judges and you find that they were men decided for the Lord, their God, or they would never have delivered Israel. Remember Samuel and David, and Nathan and Elijah! What grandeur surrounded the head of the Tishbite because he was exceedingly zealous for the Lord God of Israel! He was no timeserver, as Jezebel and Ahab knew full well.

In later years Daniel is the grand type of decision as we see him opening his window and praying, as before, though he knows that the threat of death hangs over him. The three holy children, also, are before us defying the devouring flames of the furnace sooner than bow before Nebuchadnezzar's golden image. In New Testament times John the Baptist rises to the front rank by his resolute fidelity and Pilate sinks to eternal shame by reason of his vacillation. Paul is covered with renown, while Agrippa, who is "almost persuaded," is lost in oblivion! In each age *decision* has been the one thing needed—to bend, bow and cringe has been fatal—but to stand like iron columns and bronze walls has been safety and honor.

The same firmness is needed today! We, too, must take our stand, and, taking it, must hold it as though we were rooted to the ground! O blessed Spirit, give us Grace for this! Faithful Redeemer, set Your image upon us that we, too, may resist even to blood, striving against sin! My discourse shall run thus—*Decision for the Lord*—let me *describe it, extol it and demand it*.

I. First, let me DESCRIBE IT. It means many things, all of which must be worked in us by Divine Grace, or we shall never possess them, though we may have their counterfeits. Decision implies, first, that all *hesitation is gone*. There is a period when the thoughtful mind hangs in equilibrium and it is a question which way the scale will turn. We have a time of testing and proving when the crucibles are brought out and the firing pots are placed among the coals. To come wisely and speedily through this period is a great mercy. This was all over in the case of Joshua—he had finished the proving of all things and reached the holding fast of that which is good! The balance was no longer in suspense. The scale had gone down for God and His cause. It rested in its place never to be moved. Joshua had a mind of his own and he knew his own mind. Doubt had long ago vanished, debate was finally closed, resolve was taken and taken without a grain of reserve. And consequently action was forcible and ardent.

And now, dear Friends, it is surely time with some of us, especially with those of us who have reached the prime of life, that we, too, had done with the fickleness of irresolution! Have we not had enough of hesitation, deliberating, trifling and delaying? The time past may suffice for these—has it

not been already far too long? You will make no journey, O traveler, if, now that the sun is in its zenith, you do not soon decide which way to walk! Mariner, your voyages will be scant if you lie much longer at anchor! The season of favorable winds is passing away and yet your sail remains unfilled—will you never have solved the problem—“to what port shall I steer? With what cargo shall I load my boat?” Is our life to end in a constant repetition of the question, “What shall I be?”

If we could change places with the weathercock and become the toy of circumstances, irresolution might be alright. But for a man, *decision* is indispensable—he must know where he is and where he is going! And it will be an evidence of *salvation* to him if he has cancelled doubt by a firm faith in Jesus and ended hesitancy by full consecration to the service of the Lord. O that every man and woman among us had, through Divine Grace, come to this point, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”!

This state of heart indicates *superiority to the evil influence of others*. While we are children, we are plastic to every hand. We believe what is told us by the last informant, our judgment is swayed by our parents, schoolmasters and elders. But, when we come to be men and women, we put away the childish things which controlled us. We ought to put away this propensity to lean upon other men’s judgments. Our own understanding should now be exercised, or else why is it given to us? God waits to guide us, but He would have us cry to Him and not follow the trail of our fellows. We should endeavor to have a mind enlightened by Grace, decided for God and established in the Truth. And then we should strike out our own path for God and His Truth—and count it no very great hardship if in that path we should have to walk alone.

A man should not be like a house which is one of a row, which would come down with a crash if those on the right and left were removed—he should be altogether detached so that all four walls will stand without another house to buttress them. Alas, I fear that few have reached this point! The most of men are a feeble herd and follow their leaders, having no minds of their own. Woe to them when blind leaders lead them into the ditch! The great guide of the world is *fashion* and its god is respectability—two phantoms at which brave men laugh! How many of you look around on society to know what to do? You watch the general current and then float upon it! You study the popular breeze and shift your sails to suit it. True men do not so!

You ask—“Is it fashionable? If it is fashionable, it must be done.” Fashion is the law of multitudes, but it is nothing more than the common consent of fools! The world has its fashions in religion as well as in dress and many of you feel the influence of it. If you had fallen in among Christ’s people some of you would have made a profession of religion before now, but having, on the contrary, been cast among the ungodly, even though you have *some* desires towards Christ, you are held back by the evil influence. What are you but babes, fit for the nursery and the sucking bottle?

If you were men, you would stand on your own feet and not need to be carried in someone's arms—

***“Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose true,
And dare to make it known!”***

Little will it decrease our eternal misery if all the rest of the world should be lost with us! Company in Hell will be the reverse of consolation! If we lose Heaven for fashion's sake, it will be no solace to us that others lost it, too. We are born alone and shall have to die alone and to be judged alone—it is time that we began to look into our souls' affairs with our best judgment and no longer be as the sere leaf in the wind, or the log in the rapids. God has given to each man a conscience, to each man a heart—and He will not allow men to quench their personal consciences and yield up their hearts to be molded by others—He will hold them personally responsible for the right use of judgment, reason and heart! Oh Sirs, may every one of us know the Lord for ourselves and, forsaking the broad road with its many travelers may we be bold to walk in the narrow way which leads unto life.

Right decision for God is deep, calm, clear, fixed, well grounded and solemnly made. Joshua does not speak his determination lightly. Gaze upon the stern warrior's face scarred in many battles, bronzed with exposure, wrinkled with more than 100 years of varied experience! He looks not like a trifler. He speaks not as one who sings a love song and trills it from his lips! His utterances rise from that broad breast of his with the rugged honesty and brave sincerity of a soldier prince. “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,” as much as if he had said, “I have known my God too many years to forsake Him, now. I have not bared my breast to the battle so many scores of times to now be a coward!

“I have not dwelt under the shadow of the Almighty 40 years in the wilderness and all these years in Canaan that I might seek idols! The golden calf is not for me—I saw it ground to powder long ago! The idols of the Amorites are not for me—I have dashed thousands of them to the ground.” He speaks as one who has weighed the matter, counted the cost and come to a decision which he can defend against all comers. It would be idle to try and shake his resolve—it is as stable as Lebanon! You do not hear in him a timeserver, who, to please men, falls in with the general affirmation! Nor is he a mere scholar, repeating what he has learned by rote—nor a ceremonialist, muttering his creed for form's sake!

You hear an honest man revealing his heart and uttering his inmost soul with awful earnestness, even in that utterance careless of being heard of men except so far as their hearing may be of use to themselves. He speaks with immovable resolve. His soul is anchored and defies all storms—“As for me and my house we will, despite crowds and customs. We will, despite temptations and trials. We will, despite idols or devils, to the end of the chapter, serve Jehovah.” Such ought the decision of every one of us be, and I earnestly wish that it were so.

That resolve on the part of Joshua was *openly declared*. I want to come straight home to some of you here who have said in your hearts, “Yes, we will serve the Lord,” but you have never yet *declared* your allegiance, for you have thought it quite enough to promise in secret. Does not Joshua’s outspoken vow make you blush? You are espoused to Christ, you say, but will there never be an open marriage? Will you never take Him publicly before the eyes of men to be your Lord and Husband forever and ever? Does Jesus agree to secret nuptials? Can such a thing be done in a corner? Of old the candle was put on a candlestick—is it now to be put under a bushel? You say you are His soldier—will you never put on your Prince’s uniform? Shall your Captain’s colors never adorn you? Will you never come forward and take your Commander’s weapon in your hand and march at His bidding to the fight?

That is sorry courage which skulks behind the bushes! That is poor loyalty which never utters the King’s name! That is a questionable decision which dares not declare itself to be on the Lord’s side! Remember how the Lord Jesus said. “He that denies Me before men, him will I deny before My Father who is in Heaven.” I like this in Joshua, that he would have no one be in doubt as to where he was. He gives them his whereabouts plainly enough. Where Jehovah’s altar smokes with the sacrifice of bullocks—where the paschal lamb is slain and the blood is sprinkled, where the High Priest offers incense to the one invisible and ever glorious God—there will you find Joshua! And there his sons and daughters, too, for, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Why are you not equally openhearted, O you who love the Lord? What excuse have you for your silence? I am not able to see what is the good of a decision, however firm and deep, if it is never asserted! It may be good for the man who has made it, but as far as *society* is concerned, what can be the influence of a decision which is altogether secret? Why, my Brothers and Sisters, should there be concealment? Our God has not loved us with reserve and kept His mercy in the dark! Our Savior has not gone sneaking down the ages, ashamed to confess the mortals whom He loves! And if He has never been ashamed of us, we ought never to be ashamed of Him! O, my Brethren, can you hesitate? Are you not ashamed of being ashamed, and afraid to be, any longer, afraid? Out with it! There! Run up the colors to the masthead, where every eye may see them and there let them be nailed! And if any man is at war with Jesus he is at war with us! Let earth and Hell know this once and for all!

In Joshua’s case his resolve was not only openly acknowledged, but *earnestly carried out*. Some have declared themselves on the Lord’s side and yet they do not serve the Lord. Their names are down in the Church book and they attend to the outward ordinances, but as for any serving of the Lord, you will have to search for it and search in vain! Joshua went in for serving God in truth. He was a soldier and if anyone had asked him, “Whose soldier are you, Joshua?” he would have answered, “I am God’s soldier.” “Whose battles do you fight?” “I fight the battles of Jehovah.”

“And what is your object in fighting?” “To glorify Jehovah!” He was committed to the Lord’s cause from head to foot!

Many professors do not understand what this means. They view religion as a kind of weekend farm. They have another estate which is their home and main care—and the kingdom God is a weekend farm—to be mainly managed by the minister as a bailiff. Their religion gets their spare time and odd thoughts. Jesus comes in for the cold meat that is left over, while the world has the hot steaks. Religion is by no means the great channel along which the strength of their life runs—it is a sort of backwater—they let the waste water run there when they have more than enough to turn the mill-wheel of business.

They are seen at Prayer Meetings when there are no accounts to settle and no new books to read. They do something for the Church of God when they have nothing to do, no friend coming to spend the evening with them and no amusement available. They treat the Lord Jesus Christ very indifferently. They hope they will be saved by Him—I hope they will, too! They say they will be wonders of Grace if they are and *I think they will, too!* Such conduct to the bleeding Lamb is dastardly and I hate it! As for me, I will be bold enough to say with Joshua, “I will serve the Lord”—that is to say, if I am His servant I will *be* His servant and lay myself out for Him. I will not bear His name, eat His bread and wear His clothes and yet do Him no service! Better die than live so dishonestly!

Certain servants of great men are kept merely for show. You shall go into My Lord’s house and see a fine fellow who is paid a considerable income. What does he do? He is not kept to do *anything*—he is the *ornament* of the establishment—the display of those magnificent legs and that beautiful form which looks so well in uniform is all his master gets! Surely, some Christians suppose that they are engaged on the same terms and that the Lord Jesus Christ, having the distinguished honor of having *their* names in His Church book, is perfectly satisfied though they do nothing! These are the fellows who are everlastingly grumbling at those who *do* serve—and become the pests of the Church. Be not like them! Better far to die outright! Serve the Lord with real labor, to whose free Grace and dying love you owe your all!

Once more. Joshua’s decision was *adhered to throughout the whole of his life*. He had begun early in the service of God and he never left it. A hundred years rolled over his head, but we never discover in him any desire to take up with the service of Baal, or the service of the seraphs! He continued to the last, true to the resolve, “We will serve Jehovah.” Happy are we, Brothers and Sisters, if Grace enlisted us in the service of Christ while we were yet young! Happier, still, if Grace has kept us, to middle age, still firm in our young resolve. And happiest of all shall we be if, when our hair is gray, we shall be able to say, “O God, You have been my God from my youth, and until this time I have declared Your wondrous works. Now, also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not!”

He who decides aright for God decides for eternity. Beloved, you never will quit serving God! There never was such a one yet! My Lord and Mas-

ter never fires His old servants, nor do His old servants ever run away from Him! The more they serve Him, the more they wish to serve Him. Their physical strength may fail them, but never their love to His work! They still bring forth fruit in old age to show that the Lord is upright. Blessed are they who have this abiding thoroughness in the cause of the Lord their God!

II. Let me now PRAISE DECISION. In religion nothing is more desirable than to be out and out in it. With some little variation I might say of it as of knowledge—

***“A little piety’s a dangerous thing,
Drink deepest draughts at that refreshing spring.”***

To enjoy religion you must *plunge* into it! To wade into it up to the ankles may make you shiver with anxieties, doubts and questions till you resemble a trembling boy unwillingly entering a bath on a cold morning! But to plunge into its depths is to *secure a glow of holy joy*. Some of you are ill at ease at sea, but my friend in the blue jacket over yonder likes it well enough, for he is always there! His home is on the rolling waves and there is no seasickness for him. Those of you who make short trips upon the sea of piety and do a little coasting religion now and then, are sick with doubts and fears. But if you sailed always on that sea you would get your sea legs! You would gain full assurance and see the glories of the Lord and His wonders in the deep!

It is with *true* religion as with the American’s orchards. A gentleman was invited into a garden to taste the apples. “No,” he said, “I would rather not,” and being often asked to come and partake, yet refusing, the other said, “I guess you’ve a prejudice against my apples.” “Yes,” said the man, “I have tasted a few of them and they are very sour.” “But which,” said he, “did you taste?” “Why, those apples which fall into the road over the hedge.” “Ah, yes,” said the owner, “they are as sour as crabs! I planted them for the good of the boys, but if you come into the *middle* of the lot you will find a different flavor”—and it was so.

Now, just round the border of religion, along the outer hedge, there are some very sour apples of conviction, self-denial, humiliation and self-despair! They are planted on purpose to keep hypocrites and mere professors out. But in the midst of the garden are luscious fruits, mellow to the taste and sweet as nectar! The *central* position in religion is the sweetest. The nearer to God, the sweeter the joy! If I were a German, which I am not, the last sort of German I should like to be would be an Alsatian or a Lorrainer, because I would have to be a German by nationality, but might be even more a Frenchman in manners! And if ever the war should be renewed between the two nations, the fighting would be sure to come very near my farm and home. I should not like to be a German-Frenchman, or a French-German in time of war! I would prefer to be of pure breed. As to sacred things I would not be a neutral. No, no! Let me be out and out, thorough and decided! If you are a Christian, be a Christian! If you serve the devil, serve him out and out! And if you serve the Lord, serve Him with your whole heart and soul and strength.

A decision for God enables a man to direct his ways. A man who resolves that he will serve the Lord knows his way about the world. Something will happen to you in business tomorrow. You will have a fine opportunity—you will be able to make a great deal of money. But it will be by sailing very near the wind and you would rather not have the transaction published in *The Times*. When that temptation comes before you, how will you act? I do not know, but if you have made up your mind that you will serve the *Lord*, you will not need to consult your partner—your course will be clear! Nine out of every 10 questions which can possibly come before you in your business are already answered when the grand question is settled!

Is such an action dishonest? Then it matters nothing how profitable it might be—it is dismissed as quite beyond consideration. Is such a course necessitated by honesty? Then let it be followed whatever the loss may be! David prayed “lead me in a plain path because of my enemies.” And the man who has made up his mind, by Divine Grace, that he will serve the Lord, has that prayer fulfilled! *This saves many men from temptation.* Satan tempts those who can be tempted, but when he finds men sufficiently resolved, there is a certain order of temptation with which he never assails them again. He adapts his devices to our standing and does not use, for lion-hearted minds, those petty nets with which he takes small birds. As a giant walks along unconscious of the cobwebs across his path, so does a thoroughly consecrated man break through a thousand temptations which, indeed, to him are no longer temptations at all!

Thorough-going men *wield a mighty influence*. Joshua was able to speak for his house as well as for himself. Many fathers cannot speak for *themselves* and, therefore, you may guess the reason why they cannot speak for their families! Joshua’s religion was so intense that it, by the Divine blessing, set his sons burning with the same flame. I have known a Christian woman to be so low in Grace that she never influenced one of her children to desire to be like she was. And I have heard of fathers who we hope were Christian men, whose force to repel from piety was greater than their power to attract to it!

God give us more vitality in our own religion and we shall influence our children and servants—and from them the savor will spread all around! For this reason and a thousand more it is desirable beyond measure to be decided and resolute for the Lord’s cause! Hesitation and wavering can answer no purpose, but a prompt decision is, in every way, commendable.

III. I find I shall not be able to say one half of what I intended to have said this morning and, therefore, I shall come to a close by DEMANDING THIS DECISION FOR CHRIST which I have described and praised. May the Holy Spirit enable you to answer to the demand! A decision is required because the Lord deserves to have it. He who made us ought not to be served hesitatingly. He who gave His Son to die for us ought not to be trifled with. By the splendor of Deity and the Glory of the Cross, I claim your whole hearts for my Lord! If the Christian religion is a lie, it is a most detestable one and it ought to be abhorred heartily! But if the service of God

is, indeed, right. And if religion is a matter of fact, it demands our whole heart, soul and strength—nor should it have less.

The service of the Lord is not a matter to be loosely touched with the tips of one's fingers, but it should excite all the powers and passions of our entire nature to obedient action. My dear Hearer, look at yourself for a moment. Is there much in you—taking the largest estimate you can of yourself? Are your dimensions so very vast? Compare yourself with the thrice holy God! Those tall archangels who bow before Him are as *nothing* in His sight! What must *you* be? And if you, as a whole, are so little, do you dream of dividing yourself and giving God a part? The Heaven, even the Heaven of heavens and the realms of space are not enough for Him!

And all things that He has made are but as a drop in a bucket compared with His infinite Majesty! As for this little dominion of your body and soul, will you carve it out among rival monarchs and insult the Lord by offering Him a *corner* while you save spaces for the world, the flesh and the devil? Mock not the Majesty of Heaven! If a gnat that dances in the summer sunbeam above the Rhine should talk of dividing its allegiance between the German Emperor and the French Marshal, you would smile. Shall you, you insignificant creature, talk of dividing yourself between God and Mammon? Let me demand of you, dear Friends, that you give to God your whole mind and soul, because to attempt a middle position is mean and dishonorable!

Who claims to be indifferent to the claims of virtue? Who dares to be neutral in the battle between truth and a lie? Brand him as a coward! To refuse to take our place upon great questions is disgraceful! And when the issue is one which divides the unwise—a question between holiness and sin, between God and the devil—why it is a mean thing for a man to insinuate that he really is not called upon to decide and that he may take up a position midway between the two! God save you from such dishonor! If, after all, the world and the things thereof are best, say so and take your side! And this morning, if not another person should do it, say in your heart, "As for me and my house, we will serve ourselves and the world." If you mean it, say it out straight and do not hide it!

For a man to say, "I cannot determine what I shall serve, but I rather think I shall serve myself till I get pretty nearly worn out. And then I shall turn about and try what is to be done with religion," is detestable! Such beings are hardly as respectable as oxen and asses, which at least know their owners! Not to decide for the Lord is dangerous in the last degree. There is Lot in Sodom—perilous is his position, but the angels come to him and they say, "This city is to be burned with fire, you must escape." Lot is on the road at once and before long he reaches the mountain and is safe.

His wife is willing to go, too, and yet unwilling—she wavers and delays. She has not quite made up her mind. She does not like leaving that house full of new furniture and that wardrobe of fine linen! Moreover, her neighbors, though they did not go to Chapel every Sunday and were rather loose in their morals, were very cheerful, chatty people—she did

not quite like leaving them. See, she looks back! She may look back forever, for there she stands, transformed into a pillar of salt.

Oh, you who think the world has many attractions! You who would like to serve God but still feel that there is a great deal to be said on the other side of the question, come and taste this salt! Its acrid flavor may be healthy to you if it makes you, from now on, dread dallying and hesitating! Remember there are no curses in the Bible more terrible than those which are directed against those who stand hesitating between two opinions. Listen to this Old Testament curse, you who make no profession, you who contradict your profession by ill lives. “Curse you Meroz, says the Lord, curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” Did they fight *against* the Lord? Not they! Why are they cursed? Because they did not fight *for* Him! What if this curse is hovering over *this* house to fall upon the head of those men who go not forth to the help of the Lord! Will it fall upon you?

Now, listen to the New Testament word which comes from those lips which never spoke too roughly—lips like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh! Here they are—“I would you were cold or hot. So then because you are neither cold nor hot I will spit you out of My mouth.” Who is this offensive one? Did he burn the Savior’s lips by hot persecutions? No. Did he freeze them with utter coldness of heart? No. He was a harmless, *good* sort of person—moderate, sober, easy-going—in fact, a lukewarm man. He was a little warm—only a little more and he would have been hot. He was a little cool—only a little cooler and he would have been as refreshing as the snows of Lebanon.

He was neither cold nor hot. Yes, and Christ said He loathed him! I do not read of His spitting anything out of His mouth except this. And this He cannot bear. Some of you, if you judged yourselves, would say you are not good enough for Heaven, but rather too good for Hell. Alas, Hell is your portion and an inner dungeon therein! Repent of your double-mindedness and turn unto the Lord with purpose of heart! I can see where you are, you betweenites! There is the army of God, a vast and mighty host on yonder hill. I see the glittering warriors ready for the fray. Yonder encamps the host of Satan on the opposite hill. Black and grim is the Prince of Darkness—and fierce are they that follow him.

Where are *we* this morning? Some of us can say we are with the Prince Emanuel. We are poor warriors, yet we serve under His standard. Possibly there are some here who are on the wrong side and are so honest that they will not deny that they are enlisted on the opposite side. But my Hearers, *where are you?* Where are you? “We are thinking about it.” But where *are* you while you are thinking? “We are considering and judging.” But *where are you now?* Mark this! When the fight comes and our Lord’s artillery shall come into play—and when the adversaries on the other hand reply to us—you will receive the shot from *both* sides!

And when the armies come to deadly hand-to-hand fight, you will be trampled down by both! Do we not read of some who will wake up “to

shame and everlasting contempt”? The saints will be ashamed of you, because you did not join with Christ in the day of battle. And the adversary, himself, will despise you because you shrunk away, even from him! Be one thing or the other!

In closing, remember that to be between the two is, after all, utterly impossible. Though I have thus pictured some as hovering between the two armies, it is not actually the case, for every man is on one side or the other. You are either dead or alive! You are either justified or condemned! You are either in the gall of bitterness or enjoying the sweets of liberty! No man can serve two masters and no man can be without a master. God will not have half the soul—and the world will not have half the soul. Both God and sin are imperious and monopolizing—they will have the whole or none—

***“God and Mammon! O be wise,
Serve them both? It cannot be!
Ease in warfare, saint and miser?
These will never well agree.
Give the fawning foe no credit,
So the bloody flag’s unfurled.
That base heart, the Word has said it,
Loves not God that loves the world.”***

Put Christ into the heart and He will chase sin out, or keep sin in the soul and sin will put down every better thought till the man is altogether vile. When you get home write this down if you will, “*As for me, I will serve the Lord.*” Put your name to it in earnest. Or, if this is not to your mind, write, “*As for me, I will serve the world,*” and put your name to it. I long to drive you to a decision! If God is God, serve Him! If Baal is God, serve him! O, may the Spirit of God lead you to decide for God and His Christ this very moment and He shall have the praise forever! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Joshua 24:11-27; Psalm 101.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—63 (SONG III), 671, 645.

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CERTAIN SINGULAR SUBJECTS

NO. 1718

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

“And I gave unto Isaac, Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau Mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.”
Joshua 24:4.

THIS passage, though audibly uttered by the mouth of Joshua, is to be regarded as the immediate voice of God. Joshua said unto all the people, “Thus says Jehovah, God of Israel.” Jehovah reminded the tribes, their elders and judges, of all that He had done and of all that He had been to them—and from this He challenged their allegiance, requiring that they should henceforth be loyal unto their great Benefactor. Addressing them, Himself, His argument became all the more impressive. I reverence all Scripture more than tongue can tell, but yet I venerate most of all those portions of the Word which are God’s own voice—the *thoughts* of Deity interpreted into human speech by Deity, itself! The passage now before us, though it reads like a piece of ordinary history such as might have been composed by a common scribe, has about it a vastness of meaning such as can only be found in the language of the infinite God.

When God inspires David, or Isaiah or Paul, He teaches us most graciously, but when He condescends to speak, Himself, how shall we sufficiently reverence the Words? We have here, not so much a letter dictated by God, as the actual autograph of the great Father! My text is written with the finger of God. A glory blazes along the lines—the letters are all illuminated—the words glow like the sapphire work of Heaven’s pavement. Our text has a world of meaning in it. It may, as we notice its plain words and prosaic statements, seem to be a mere common box, but it is, in very deed, an ark of precious perfumed wood, overlaid with pure gold, and filled with gems and jewels rich and rare!

May the Holy Spirit give us eyes with which to perceive the treasures which lie before us in these words—“I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau Mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.”

I. The first thing that I discern here is HISTORY AND THE HAND OF GOD IN IT. See, “I gave,” and then, again, “I gave.” It is not merely that Esau and Jacob were born of Isaac and Rebekah, but the Lord says, “I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau.” How plainly does this declare that the hand of God is in human history! At first sight, history seems a great tangle, a snarl, a confusion—but on looking at it more closely, we perceive that it is only in *appearance* a maze—but in *fact* a marvelous piece of arrangement, exhibiting perfect precision and never-failing accuracy! Our carnal reason sees the wrong side of the carpet and it appears to be without design or order—but there is another side to history—and looked at

from that standpoint it reveals a wonderful pattern of beauty displaying unparalleled wisdom and goodness!

Histories of nations are, from the human side, little more than a narration of the crimes of kings and the follies of their people. And yet, viewed from another quarter, they are the record of the dealings of God with men—the story of love's labor to reclaim the lost! Look at Calvary's sacrifice as it rises above all other events—even as, this morning, I saw the hills and the tops of tall trees standing out above the morning mist. What a sight it is! The Cross towering over the ages looking down on their sins and sorrows! Calvary—what is it? What but the climax of human iniquity, where man became not so much a regicide, though he slew his King, as a Decide for, to the utmost of his power, he slew his God!

On the Cross, human enmity of God reached its most dread extremity! With wicked hands men crucified and slew the Son of God! Yet it is equally true that on Calvary we see more of the goodness, Grace, mercy, justice and long-suffering of God than anywhere else. The Cross is, at once, our crime and our salvation—an exhibition of man's foulest sin and of God's richest Grace! Calvary is of all spots, the blackest and the brightest—the place where Hell displayed its most deadly power and yet the very gate of Heaven! Thus is all human history, according to its measure and proportion, a bitter sweet. Where man's mischief and misery abound, there do God's goodness and Grace much more abound.

We see the hand of God in history very strikingly in the raising up of remarkable men at certain special periods. It is true, as the Lord says, "I gave unto Isaac, Jacob and Esau." Children are the gift of God. This is true not only of Isaac but of all mortal men. God gave to a worthy couple, George Washington; to another pair, John Howard; and to a third, George Whitefield. Each of these, in his own special way, was a Divine gift to men. Children are born with differing talents and varied capacities, but all about them which will make them blessings is the gift of God. I shall not tarry to mention great men whose names mark epochs in history from which men date an increase of light and happiness—but let no man think of these friends and leaders of mankind without admitting the hand of God in their birth, training, disposition and ability.

The greatest blessing which God ever gave to man was the Man, Christ Jesus, and, under Him, the next best blessings are men. You remember the passage, "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And He gave some Apostles," and so forth. Ascension gifts are sure to be worthy of the occasion and, therefore, eminently precious—and these are all men! Within a man—poor, lowly, humble and even sinful, though that, man may be in himself—there may lie concealed an almost infinite blessing from the Most High! Even as within an acorn sleeps a forest, or within a flint lies light for a nation's watch-fires. When the Negro slave had borne long years of bondage and hope of deliverance seemed far away, it was God that gave an Abraham Lincoln who led the nation onward till "Emancipation" flamed upon its banners

Long before, when England, free in every corner of it, yet held slaves in its colonies, it was God that gave Wilber-force and raised him up to plead in Parliament the rights of men, till the command went forth—

***“Thus says Britannia, empress of the sea,
Your chains are broken; Africa, be free!”***

In all such acts of righteousness, the coming forth of the man of the hour must be attributed to God’s own hands. The men, themselves, may not know why they have come to power—of them it might often be said as the Lord said of Cyrus—“I girded you, though you have not known Me.” The mighty ones that contend for wrong, bind the chains and forge the fetters of the oppressed, do not know the champions who are predestined to overturn them, but God knows, and that is enough! Tyrants have always just cause to be afraid, for every birth may produce a deliverer. Somewhere in a hovel there may sleep, in a rude cradle, the boy who shall shake the throne of evil!

As yet it has always happened in due season that Pharaoh has been confronted by Moses and the princes of Midian by Gideon. For every Sisera there is a Jael and for every Goliath a David. The upas tree may increase its deadly shadow, but an axe is sharpening for the felling of it! Evil is a gourd and though a man is but a worm, yet he shall destroy that gourd. God is still working in the fashioning—oh, with what mystery—of His own instruments! In His book are written the members of men who are yet to be, who are now being fashioned in secret by the hand of God! These shall, by-and-by, appear, and shall lead on the race to a further unloosing of its bonds. I rejoice in the possibilities which lie in birth!

As to the One great Seed of the woman we look for our greatest deliverance, so do we, in a lower sense, look to her seed for the overthrow of many of the doings of the serpent race. That curse which made her, in sorrow, bring forth children, contains enclosed within itself, like a bud in its sheath, the promise of untold benediction! Often at a birth might an age rejoice and sing, “Unto us a child is born: unto us a son is given.” Let parents think of this and dedicate their offspring with many a prayer to the Lord whose gift they are. Let old men think of this and cry to God to raise up true men to fill the places which they, themselves, can no longer occupy. Lo! Children are a heritage of the Lord!

When our sons are a seed that the Lord has blest, blessed is the man that has his quiver full of them. Let us bless and praise the Lord, as we look back in history upon God’s manifest interference with the course of events by the singular births of men whom He has used to effect His own Divine purposes! Nobody denies that the hand of God is in the coming of men for the hour when the hour calls for the men. So, also, is the hand of God distinctly to be seen in all great events. If Esau captures Mount Seir, then the setting up of the Edomite dominion, bad as it may have been, is, from another point of view, a matter in which God’s purpose and design are to be noted, for He says—“I gave Esau mount Seir.”

Brothers and Sisters, I believe—and I hope the Truth of God is not too strong for you—that not a tiny bird pecks up a worm from the ground without your Father. A plant does not sprout in the corner behind the wall

and shoot up its flower, seed, ripen and decay apart from the Lord of Hosts! Much less does an empire rise, flourish, or decline without Divine co-operation! When the sere leaf falls from the sycamore in the autumn time, a Providence guides the leaf to its place upon the sod. And when the worm uplifts itself to draw that leaf into the tunnel which it has made, the hand of the Lord directs the burial! In *everything* that happens, be it small or great, the Lord is present and His will is done!

It is so in all the plotting and maneuvering of kings and princes and senates; in the stirs of public opinion; in the marching of armies and in all that transpires among mortal men. Though the iniquity of man is abundantly seen, yet the overruling power of God is never absent. The world is not left to itself, given over to the lord of misrule! In all events the hand of God may be perceived by all who care to perceive it. I reckon war to be a huge crime on man's side, but, when battalions have marched against battalions, the destiny of empires and possibly of the whole race of man, has turned upon the health of a commander, the clearness of his eyes, or the quickness of his messenger—yes, the turning aside of a bullet, or the fall of a horse, or the breaking of an axle has become the pivot of history, the turning point of ages—and there at the center the Lord has been surely ready!

Essential points have been secured beyond all question. Perhaps it is more nearly right to say that every turn of history has been essential and that the whole of it has been in the hands of the Highest. It is singular how God is seen, both in dangers and preservations, in connection with crises of history. Wellington at Waterloo sat on his horse, Copenhagen, all day long. A friend of mine, well known to most of you, said to him, "I suppose your horse must have been very weary." "No," said the duke, "He was so fresh that when I got off from him, he threw his heels into the air and almost struck my temple. I was not in greater danger all through the battle than at that moment." God had preserved the hero all that day and we little know what had been the result if a chance slug or ball had carried him off!

And yet you see when the red mouth of war was growing silent, the Iron Duke was still in jeopardy! Had he been suddenly cut off, our island might have become an insignificant province of a vast Napoleonic empire! But he was immortal till his work was done. Above the awful din of war, I hear the voice of God, and even out of such an evil which makes earth, for a while like Hell, the good Lord of All produces good! Masters of armies reckon their hosts, but the Lord of Hosts they forget. They plan and scheme, these masters of men to whom their people are as so much food for powder—but a higher plan overrides their planning! There is a King of kings, and Lord of lords, and He is no silent spectator of what is done, but stretches out His hand to deliver the nations from the power of evil, so that, still, by His great power, the world moves onward to something better.

We think of this poor world with great sadness when we see all the crime and sin which defile it, and yet we join with Galileo in saying, "It does move though!" Truth makes progress! The right is winning! If we do

not see an improvement today, or tomorrow, yet take any 20 years and you will see that the world is moving—moving on to that grand day when the song shall ascend, “Hallelujah, Hallelujah: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” As the Lord’s hand was in Esau’s possession of Mount Seir, so is it in the settlement of every tribe and people. And it is to be seen by all observant eyes in all the great epochs of the history of man. Yet please notice that whenever we say this—and I say it pretty plainly—we *never* excuse the sin and folly of man!

We speak of predestination and foreknowledge because we find these Truths of God in Scripture and they seem, to us, to be facts in the very nature of things. God knows all that happens, otherwise He were not God, but a poor, blind deity. And if He knows that a certain fact will happen, then it is a fixed and settled thing, depend on that! Nothing happens other than God foreknew would happen and, therefore, it is fixed! If I laid aside predestination, yet foreknowledge would be quite enough for me. Something or other is certain to happen and God knows what that something or other is—and, therefore, it is fixed not by blind fate, but still fixed. Yet this fixedness is perfectly consistent with the free agency and responsibility of man! Man thinks, resolves and acts as freely, and as much on his own accord, as if there were no foreknowledge and no God! In the book of the unrevealed, everything is written—but the mystic roll is laid up in the archives of Heaven and no man knows what is written in it.

Down below everything happens according to that book—not a stroke of it is in error, not a mistake is found in a single word—the event happens as it was foreknown. But, still, if there were no such book, man would not be more absolutely free than he is now. I can join heartily with the advocate of free agency when he talks of man’s voluntariness in his acts of sin, his willful choice of evil, his rejection of Christ and of His Grace. No man can too thoroughly believe in the willful guilt of the wicked—at any rate, I will go all lengths in such a belief. I couple with what is called Calvinistic Doctrine, the other doctrine of free agency and responsibility, which seems to me to be equally true. And if this is judged to be an inconsistency, the remark does not stagger me, for I see no inconsistency and do not believe that any exists!

My God is not a mere Omnipotent Being who can rule dead materialism and compel insensible atoms to do His will, but He can rule free agents, leaving them absolutely free and yet effecting all His purposes with them! God’s eternal purposes are accomplished and yet men remain responsible free agents both in their beginning and in their ending. Do you say that you do not understand how this can be? Neither do I, but I *believe* it! There are 10,000 other things in Nature and history which are too high for me to understand their “how” and “why”—and yet I see them—can I not, also, be sure of some matters which I do *not* see? It is not for me to profess to comprehend the nature or the ways of the Infinite! If we could comprehend the Lord, He would not be the infinite God! It is because He is beyond me—infinately beyond such a poor creature as I am—that I, all the more, reverently adore Him!

His Nature and His nets are, alike, veiled in mystery, but alike to be held in reverence. Have you never heard of the insect philosophers? They were midgets so small that a man needed a microscope to see them—but they were very great philosophers for all that—and they set about to describe an elephant. One of them hung upon the gigantic creature's ear, surveyed a small portion of its area and his theory was that an elephant was a living wall, almost perpendicular! Another stood upright somewhere on the creature's back and he concluded that the creature was a vast plain! A third, who was perched upon a hair of the animal, propounded the idea that it was a tall shaft. These midget-philosophers had not eyes large enough to take in a whole elephant and so each one judged from the tiny morsel of hide which came under his own narrow range of observation.

Yet these ephemera were nearer the mark with the elephant than our wise men are with the universe, concerning which their first principles, theories and hypotheses have usually been a museum of follies! Yet if philosophers understood the universe, that understanding would not bring their carnal minds within measurable distance of the infinite God. None but the Spirit of God can reveal God to any man—and the man, himself, must receive a new and spiritual life before he can know what the Spirit teaches. Who, then, among the worldly-wise may dream of understanding God, when even the spiritual rather embrace Him by love than grasp Him by understanding? Let us, therefore, believe what we find to be in God's Word and what we are taught by His Spirit, though it should be far above our heads! Let us not delay to believe until we can reconcile.

Do you not know that in theology—all the false parts of theology on which the sects stand and fight each other—consists of suspension bridges made of cobwebs which are intended to bridge the distance between two awful Truths of God which look as if they were divided from each other? The great rocky Truths are, in effect, accepted by both parties, but the battle waxes hot concerning these cobweb-bridges which were never worth a tithe of the ingenuity which has been wasted upon them. I hold it true that God is in history and in everything! And I read the newspaper that I may see how my heavenly Father governs the world! And this I believe though I most clearly see that men sin willfully, wickedly, voluntarily—and that they are guilty free agents in all their wrong-doing. These thoughts come to me when I remember the character of Esau, and yet read the Lord's words, "I gave unto Esau mount Seir to possess it."

To us, dear Friends, the hand of God is very visible in our own case. Look at the hand of God that gave to you and to me such parents as we have—I mean those of us who have the great delight of having descended from Christian men and women. Had we anything to do with that? And yet the greatest part of a man's future depends upon the parents of whom he is born. No person can deny that our parentage is beyond our own power and yet, to a large extent, it colors the whole future of life. Is not the hand of God in it? Why shall one be born of a long succession of drunks and of thieves, and have within himself an insatiable passion born with him to imitate them—while another inherits a sound constitution

from his parents and, though he has no tendency to the Grace of God, yet he has a tendency to morality and naturally develops self-restraint and gentle manners? Do we not see the hand of God in the parents that He gave us?

I cannot be so blind as to deny my own obligations! I shall forever bless God that I was given to a godly couple whose delight it was to lead me in the ways of God. And do we not see the hand of God, again, in our children? Many of us do. Oh, how some of us bless and praise God that ever such sons fell to our lot! We never think of them without delight, for they are living in the service of the Lord Jesus, spending and being spent in the Divine Master's service. Look at your children as the gifts of God and if they are not yet all that you could desire, yet still believe that God has given them to you, even as He says, "I gave Isaac, Jacob and Esau." You, dear Friends in Christ, united in holy wedlock, may look upon your children as not unclean, but holy, in the sense intended by the Apostle when he speaks of the unbelieving wife as sanctified by the believing husband and adds, "else were your children unclean, but now are they holy."

They are not to be viewed as the unhappy fruit of an unhallowed union, but as gifts of God, to be brought up for Him and trained in His fear. They come not as the result of uncleanness, but as gifts from the Lord, to whom marriage is an honorable estate. It were a sad thing if the sight of my child made me blush for shame. But it is a joy to look upon him as, like Samuel, asked of God and given of God. Bring these gifts of God to God and say, "Here, Lord, are the children which You have given me. Save them by Your Grace, since in love You have given them to me. These dear ones are favors from Yourself, blessings upon which I set great store. O Lord, let Your name be named on them and let Your Grace be glorified in them."

Observe, further, that the Lord's hand is in all the prosperity which He gives to any. He says, "I gave unto Esau Mount Seir, to possess it." It is by God's allotment that temporal things fall as they do—even the ungodly have their portion in this life by Divine grant. It were "vain to rise up early, and to sit up late, and to eat the bread of carefulness," if the Lord did not build the house and prosper the labor! It is He that gives you power to get wealth. Our daily bread comes from the granary of Providence. The store most ample, or the measure most scant must, alike, be traced to the one all-bountiful hand. And, once more, God's hand is to be seen in the place in which we live. If Esau lives in mount Seir, it is because God appoints him to be there—and if Israel goes down to Egypt, it is for the same reason. If you and I move from one place to another, it is sweet to see the cloud moving before us and to know that the Lord directs our ways. "The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord."

But I need not instance cases. The hand of the Lord has been with some of us, for good, from our cradle even until now! And we believe that He who has led us so far will still lead us until we arrive at the House not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!

II. Secondly, we have another lesson to learn from our text, and that is upon, "I gave unto Isaac, Jacob and Esau," twin children born of godly

parents. In that birth there was joy, but sorrow came by it as well as joy. What joy there was in Isaac's house that day, for we read that it had been a matter of prayer in the family! See Genesis 25:21. It had been a grief to Isaac that, married at 40 years of age, he had lived 20 years in married life without a child, although he had the promise of a seed. Later on it happened that Esau and Jacob were born. There was joy! Yes, double joy, because two sons to build up their father's house. Ah, had they known it, there was grave cause for mingled emotion in that double birth!

We read that 40 years after Esau married, he took unto himself two Canaanite wives, "which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah." Yes, we may fondly promise ourselves that children born of godly parents will be an unalloyed comfort to them and yet it may not be so. Children are certain cares and doubtful comforts. They may bring to their parents such sorrow that they may be inclined to think the barren happier than the fruitful. Hence it is well for us to leave our hopes of posterity with God—and if we reckon that in a childless house we have missed a great joy, we ought, also, to reckon that we have missed a mint of trouble by the same fact!

Your children are not born in Grace, but they are the children of nature—and that being the case, you may have to see in one of them—God grant it may be in no more—an Esau, yes, a profane person who will sell his birthright and become an enemy of the people of God! Esau was born of admirable parents, and so an Esau may be found to your boundless grief in your own family. It has been so, before, with others, and it may be so with you. The lion's whelp has been found in the sheep's fold; the vulture has been hatched in the dove's nest. There was great hope, certainly, of both boys born in Isaac's house, for we look that godly parents should train up their children in the way that they should go, so that when they are old they may not depart from it—therefore both Esau and Jacob were most hopefully started.

But Esau was not trainable. He was a wild man, went his own way and became a follower of rough sports, "a cunning hunter, a man of the field." And soon he became profane, as often happens to those whose chief pursuits are sporting. Ah, me! Ah, me! How often the brightest hopes have been blasted and those who appeared to be floating on the current which flows towards Heaven have been drifted back and lost on the forlorn shores of unbelief! It is a great advantage to you, my dear young Friend, to have been born into a Christian family, but I charge you, do not trust in it as though it were, in itself, a guarantee of salvation! Isaac, the beloved of God, has Esau for a son.

Mind that! David had to sorrow over Absalom, and Hezekiah over Manasseh. You may be the Esau of your family. Is it so? May God grant that such a dreadful portion may not be chosen by you! Remember that your brother who has lived with you, slept with you and grown with you, side by side, may be gracious and you may remain ungodly. Is it so now? Oh, that the Holy Spirit may come and work upon you till you and your brother are one in Christ, like James and John, Peter and Andrew! Father, do you find a division in your house? Then pray to God, even as Abraham

prayed for Ishmael, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!” Pray for your wayward boy! And, oh, you that are in the family and have, through Divine mercy, become a Jacob and not an Esau, ascribe it all to Sovereign Grace and give God the praise!

But forget not your brother! While he lives, have hope for him and see what you can do that he, also, may rejoice in the Lord. But, ah, if we could read the future when we look at our little children, we should rejoice with trembling! And as we cannot read the future, it is fit that we should pray with earnestness. We have prayer often at dying beds—why have we not more prayer in the chamber of birth? Surely, when an immortal spirit starts upon its endless career, it is well for us to cry to God and ask others to join with us in the loving, earnest prayer that the Holy Spirit may cause the newly-born to be born again as soon as they are able to know Jesus and believe in Him! There stands the fact—in birth there is joy tempered with godly fear, hope mingled with sacred anxiety and high advantage which may yet most sadly end in deepened responsibility and increased sin!

III. Thirdly, and very briefly, we have next to view **WORLTLINGS AND THEIR POSSESSIONS**. “I gave unto Esau Mount Seir, to possess it.” That is to say, Esau, as compared with Jacob, appeared to have the best of it, for he had “Mount Seir, to possess it,” but poor Jacob had not a foot of land that he could call his own except the family sepulcher at Machipelah, in which, afterwards, he slept the sleep of the righteous. Why does God so often give possessions to ungodly men? Why do they flourish? Why do they have their portion in this life?

Is it not, first, because God thinks little of these things and therefore gives them to those of whom He thinks little? “Why,” said Luther, in his day, “the whole Turkish empire is but a basket of husks that God gives to the hogs and, therefore, He hands it over to the unbelievers.” So often wealth and riches are but so much wash which the great Husbandman gives to the swine on His estate. Something infinitely better is reserved for the Lord’s own family! The rich blessing of true Grace He reserves for His children and heirs. It shows how little God thinks of kingdoms, empires and great riches, for He leaves these, full often, to the worst of men!

How few saints have ever worn crown or coronet! A holy man once said that the kings who have gone to Heaven might almost be counted on your fingers. See what small account the Lord makes of the world’s best store! Do you wish that ungodly men should have less? For my part, I am reconciled to their present prosperity, for it is all they will ever have. Poor souls, let them have as much of it as they may, here, for they will have nothing hereafter. Besides, they have no God—and having no God, it would take a great many fortunes to make a godless man’s portion worth a straw! If the graceless could gain all worlds, what use would they be to them when they come to die? Their own souls lost and no comfort in Christ, and no joy in the Spirit—what have they gained, after all? Let the worldlings have the husks.

Let none of us ever cry, “I gladly would fill my belly with the husks that the swine eat.” Let those have the treasures of this present evil world who

have nothing else! Never quarrel with the Lord for saying, "I gave unto Esau Mount Seir, to possess it." Besides, these comforts may lead them to reflect upon God's bounty to them and, at any rate, they ought to move them to repentance. It is my earnest hope that many an ungodly man, whom God has highly favored in the things of this life, may be influenced by the Spirit of God to say, "Why should I continue to rebel against God who has been so kind to me? He has prospered me and taken care of me. Why should I not turn to Him, and become His servant?" At any rate, gratitude for mercies received should produce repentance for sins committed.

But worldly goods have no necessary connection with ungodliness. There is no infection in harvest stores, nor iniquity in the wealth which comes of commerce. In themselves, gold and silver are harmless metals. There have been men who have enjoyed the abundance of this world, and yet *have* inherited the world to come. Not many great men after the flesh are chosen, but there is a great difference between, "not many," and, "not *any*." Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and the women who ministered unto Christ of their substance had a fair measure of the comforts of this life—and used them for their Lord. It was not Solomon's wealth that brought him down so low—his unrestrained passions were his ruin, else might he have held all his treasures and held his God, too.

Pray, therefore, that the rich may be brought to Christ! Why should not that fish be taken which has the silver shekel in its mouth? Why may not Matthew, the publican, be called from the receipt of custom? Is there not yet another Zacchaeus to be renewed by Grace? May not their indebtedness to God be used as a plea with the wealthy to give themselves to Him who has already given them so much? It was no fault in Jonah that he felt pleasure under the shade of his gourd—the fault lay in making a god of that gourd! There is no evil in having goods, but there is *great* evil in making those goods our chief good. Yet, Brothers and Sisters, so it is that the men of this world usually have the most of it. I do not say the *best* of it.

It is and always will be a mystery, as long as the world stands, that the wicked often flourish and the righteous suffer. Read the Book of Job. Read the 37th Psalm; read the 73rd Psalm and see how holy men and wise men have been perplexed and troubled by the method of the Divine Providence. To see wickedness on a throne and righteousness in a dungeon, pride enshrined in honor and holiness rolled in the kennel is a serious trial of our confidence in God—and yet there are weighty reasons why it should be so for a while. Not without wisdom does the Lord say, "I gave to Esau Mount Seir, to possess it."

IV. Now comes the fourth point and a great mystery, too. Here are THE CHOSEN OF GOD AND THEIR TRIALS. "I gave unto Esau Mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt." That is their portion. They must go down into Egypt because of famine. And they must suffer there under a tyrant's iron rod, so that they may become familiar with the drudgery of slaves. They must be strangers in a strange land and be sorely bruised beneath the foot of the oppressor. The escutcheon of their nation was to be "a smoking furnace and a burning

lamp." Moses saw Israel as well as God when he beheld a bush burning with fire but not consumed. Is not this a strange thing?

To him whom God loves best He allots the hardest conditions. Esau's sons are dukes, but Jacob's seed are drudges! Esau reigns, but Israel serves! Esau set his nest on high, but Israel crouched by the reeds of the river. The worldling would read the Scripture as if it said, "As many as I love, I caress and pamper"—but the Lord speaks not so—His Words are, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." "Whom the Lord loves He chastens and scourges"—those are very hard words—"scourges every son whom He receives." To carnal reason this seems straining! Faith, alone, can explain it.

Israel and his children went down into Egypt, first, for their preservation. So God brings His people into trial often to preserve them from the world and its evil influences; from themselves and their natural pride; from Satan and his puffing up. By sorrow and adversity the children of God are driven to their knees, brought near to their great Father and kept in fellowship with Him. Sanctified afflictions are spiritual promotions. The salt and bitterness of sorrow often preserve men from the gall and bitterness of sin.

They went down into Egypt, next, for their improvement, for the family of Jacob was in a mournful condition and by no means fit to be used of the Lord. The story of Jacob's family is a strangely sad one, perhaps Scripture does not contain more mournful pages. The evil influence of polygamy is clearly seen, blended within the errors of Laban's house and envenomed by the foul example of the Canaanites among whom they sojourned. It was time that they should shift their quarters—they were neither getting good nor *doing* good. It looked as if the Patriarch would beget an ignorant, quarrelsome, vicious race—and so they were sent down into Egypt that trouble might teach them better manners. God often thrusts His people into adversity that He may improve them, awaken them, instruct them and ennoble them.

See to it, Brothers and Sisters, that the Lord's design be fulfilled in you to the fullest. May the anvil and the file, the crucible and the flame work in you a clearance of dross and rust, and make you pure and bright. They also went down into Egypt for their education. The chosen seed needed teaching! They were getting to be rustic, not to say barbarous, in their manners—acquirements and knowledge were scant among them. They must go down into the seat of ancient learning to acquire arts and sciences and civilization. In Egypt, a race, which, otherwise had been a mob must be consolidated into a nation! A band of willful men must be trained to discipline and obedience. The Lord said, "Out of Egypt have I called My son," because Egypt was his school of learning, his drill ground of discipline. We are ignorant, rebellious and willful till the Lord trains us. "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Your Word."

The Lord teaches us on the blackboard of adversity and we are often rapped over the knuckles by the stern Master! It is wonderful what we learn when we are taken among the thorns! I hardly think that I have learned anything except in affliction! At least I know this—I owe more to

the hammer, the anvil, the file and the furnace than I do to all the green meadows and flowing brooks and singing birds that I have ever seen or heard! I fear that I have learned little beyond that which has been whipped into me! And though I am not fonder of the rod than you are, I confess that such sweet fruit grows on the bitter branch of trial that I would fear to be long without it. I would rather weep within the Lord's chosen than laugh within the reprobate! By unhallowed mirth fools grow more foolish, but by sanctified trials wise men become yet wiser. For future usefulness it is well that we have present sorrow and, like Jacob, go down into Egypt.

And they went down to Egypt, again, that God might display His great power in them. I would not care to be Esau on Mount Seir when once I see Pharaoh's hosts drowned and Israel marching through the depths of the sea!—and when I hear the song of the Israelite maidens and the shouts of the men, “Sing you to Jehovah, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.” It is worth while to go down into Egypt to come out of it with a high hand and an outstretched arm! Oh, the glory of the Lord in His redeemed! Oh, the lofty destiny of the tried people of God! Oh, the sublimity of their lives, even now! There is God in them! There is God about them. He heads the van and brings up the rear! They are as signs and wonders in their generations. He has blessed them—yes, and they shall be blessed.

It matters little that Esau has Mount Seir for a possession—Israel has her God! No foot of land, perhaps, you call your own. You do not know where your next suit of clothes will come from and God has kept you on short commons and multiplied your straits and needs. Never mind—yours is the lot of the chosen—for “Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.” That is where the story ends, according to my text, but you know the story does not end there at all, for out of Jacob and his children came the Son, the Scepter and the Throne! The Godhead took up the seed of Israel and now, today, He that sprang of Jacob's loins, according to the flesh, sits on the highest Throne of God and reigns supreme! The Shiloh has come and it matters nothing what Egypt brought of sorrow unto Jacob's seed, seeing that out of them, at the last, came the King and Savior of men!

If Jesus is ours, the rest is a small affair. Give me Christ and I ask for nothing else! Having faith in Jesus, I can leave all things with the great Disposer of events. Christ and a crust—the promise and a parish coat! Grace and an almshouse! Cannot a saint be more than content with these? So have I set before you the varying lots of God's own people and of the wicked. I hope that you are ready to say that you would rather suffer affliction with the people of God than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. God help you to make that wise choice and to make it at once! May His Spirit lead you to take the Lord Jesus to be your All in All! Amen.

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