

A WOMAN OF A SORROWFUL SPIRIT

NO. 1515

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

***“Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit.”
1 Samuel 1:15.***

The special cause of Hannah's sorrow arose from the institution of polygamy, which, although it was tolerated under the old Law, is always exhibited to us in practical action as a most fruitful source of sorrow and sin. In no one recorded instance in Holy Scripture is it set forth as admirable. In most cases the proofs of its evil effects lie open to the sun. We ought to be grateful that under the Christian religion that abomination has been wiped away, for even with such husbands as Abraham, Jacob, David and Solomon, it did not work towards happiness or righteousness. The husband found the system a heavy burden, grievous to be borne, for he soon found out the truth of the wise man's advice to the Sultan, "First learn to live with two tigresses and then expect to live happily with two wives."

The wife must, in nearly every case, have felt the wretchedness of sharing a love which ought to be all her own. What miseries Eastern women have suffered in the harem, none can tell, or perhaps imagine. In the case before us, Elkanah had trouble, enough, through wearing the double chain, but still the heaviest burden fell upon his beloved Hannah, the better of his two wives. The worse the woman, the better she could get on with the system of many wives, but the good woman, the true woman, was sure to smart under it.

Though dearly loved by her husband, the jealousy of the rival wife embittered Hannah's life and made her "a woman of a sorrowful spirit." We thank God that no longer is the altar of God covered with tears, with weeping and with crying out of those wives of youth who find their husbands' hearts estranged and divided by other wives. Because of the hardness of their hearts, the evil was tolerated for a while, but the many evils which sprang of it should suffice to put a ban upon it among all who seek the welfare of our race.

In the beginning the Lord made for man but one wife. And why only one? For He had the residue of the Spirit and could have breathed into as many as He pleased. Malachi answers, "That He might seek a godly Seed." As if it was quite clear that the children of polygamy would be ungodly and only in the house of one man and one wife would godliness be found. This witness is of the Lord and is true. But enough sources of grief remain—more than enough—and there is not in any household, I suppose, however joyous, the utter absence of the cross. The worldling says, "There

is a skeleton in every house.” I know little about such dead things, but I know that a cross of some sort or other must be borne by every child of God.

All the true-born heirs of Heaven must pass under the rod of the Covenant. What son is there whom the Father chastens not? The smoking furnace is part of the insignia of the heavenly family, without which a man may well question whether he stands in Covenant relationship to God at all. Probably some Hannah is now before me, smarting under the chastening hand of God; some child of Light walking in darkness; some daughter of Abraham bowed down by Satan and it may not be amiss to remind her that she is not the first of her kind, but that in years gone by there stood at the door of God’s house one like she is, who said of herself, “No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit.” May the ever-blessed Comforter, whose work lies mainly with the sorrowful, fill our meditation with consolation at this time.

In speaking of this, “woman of a sorrowful spirit,” we shall make this first remark—much that is precious may be connected with a sorrowful spirit but, in itself, a sorrowful spirit is not to be desired. Give us the bright eye, the cheerful smile, the vivacious manner, the genial tone. If we do not desire mirth and merriment, yet give us, at least, that calm peace, that quiet composure, that restful happiness which makes home happy wherever it pervades the atmosphere. There are wives, mothers and daughters who should exhibit more of these cheerful graces than they now do and they are very blamable for being petulant, unkind and irritable.

But there are others, I doubt not, who labor to their utmost to be all that is delightful and yet fail in the attempt, because, like Hannah, they are of a sorrowful spirit and cannot shake off the grief which burdens their heart. Now, it is idle to tell the night that it should be brilliant as the day, or bid the winter put on the flowers of summer! And equally vain is it to chide the broken heart. The bird of night cannot sing at Heaven’s gate, nor can the crushed worm leap like a hart up on the mountains. It is of little use exhorting the willow whose branches weep by the river to lift up its head like the palm, or spread its branches like the cedar—everything must act according to its kind—each nature has its own appropriate ways, nor can it escape the bonds of its fashioning. There are circumstances of constitution, education and surroundings which render it difficult for some very excellent persons to be cheerful—they are predestined to be known by such a name as this—“A woman of a sorrowful spirit.”

Note well the precious things which went in Hannah’s case with a sorrowful spirit. The first was true godliness. She was a godly woman. As we read the chapter, we are thoroughly convinced that her heart was right with God. We cannot raise any question about the sincerity of her prayer, or the prevalence of it. We do not doubt, for a moment, the truthfulness of her consecration. She was one that feared God above many, an eminently gracious woman and yet, “a woman of a sorrowful spirit.” Never draw the inference from sorrow that the subject of it is not beloved of God. You

might more safely reason in the *opposite* way, though it would not be always safe to do so, for outward circumstances are poor tests of a man's spiritual state.

Certainly Dives, in his scarlet and fine linen, was not beloved of God, while Lazarus, with the dogs licking his sores, was a favorite of Heaven. And yet it is not every rich man that is cast away, or every beggar that will be borne aloft by angels. Outward condition can lead us to no determination one way or the other. Hearts must be judged, conduct and action must be weighed and a verdict given otherwise than by the outward appearance. Many persons feel very happy, but they must not, therefore, infer that God loves them! And while certain others are sadly depressed, it would be most cruel to suggest to them that God is angry with them. It is never said, "whom the Lord loves He enriches," but it is said, "whom the Lord loves He chastens."

Affliction and suffering are not proofs of sonship, for "many sorrows shall be to the wicked" and yet, where there are great tribulations, it often happens that there are great manifestations of the Divine favor. There is a sorrow of the world that works death—a sorrow which springs from self-will and is nurtured in rebellion and is, therefore, an evil thing because it is opposed to the Divine will. There is a sorrow which eats as does a canker and breeds yet greater sorrows, so that such mourners descend with their sorrowful spirits down to the place where sorrow reigns supreme and hope shall never come. Think of this, but never doubt the fact that a sorrowful spirit is in perfect consistency with the love of God and the possession of true godliness.

It is freely admitted that godliness ought to cheer many a sorrowful spirit more than it does. It is also admitted that much of the experience of Christians is *not* Christian experience, but a mournful departure from what true Believers ought to be and feel. There is very much of Christians' experience which they never ought to experience. Half the troubles of life are homemade and utterly unnecessary. We afflict ourselves, perhaps, 10 times more than God afflicts us! We add many thongs to God's whip—when there would be but one—we must make nine! God sends one cloud by His Providence and we raise a score by our unbelief!

But taking all that off and making the still further abatement that the Gospel commands us to rejoice in the Lord always and that it would never bid us do so if there were not abundant causes and arguments for it, yet, for all that, a sorrowful spirit may be possessed by one who most truly and deeply fears the Lord. Never judge those whom you see sad and write them down as under Divine anger, for you might err most grievously and most cruelly in making so rash a judgment! Fools despise the afflicted, but wise men prize them! Many of the sweetest flowers in the garden of Grace grow in the shade and flourish in the damp.

I am persuaded that He "who feeds among the lilies" has rare plants in His garden, fair and fragrant, choice and comely, which are more at home in the damps of mourning than in the glaring sun of joy. I have known such who have been a living lesson to us all from their broken-hearted

penitence, their solemn earnestness, their jealous watchfulness, their sweet humility and their gentle love. These are lilies of the valley bearing a wealth of beauty, pleasant even to the King Himself! Feeble as to assurance and to be pitied for their timidity, yet have they been lovely in their despondencies and graceful in their holy anxieties.

Hannah, then, possessed godliness despite her sorrow. In connection with this sorrowful spirit of hers Hannah was a lovable woman. Her husband greatly delighted in her. That she had no children was to him no depreciation of her value. He said, "Am I not better to you than 10 sons?" He evidently felt that he would do anything in his power to lift up the gloom from her spirit. This fact is worth noting, for it does so happen that many sorrowful people are far from being lovable people. In too many instances their griefs have soured them. Their affliction has generated acid in their hearts and with that acid they bite into everything they touch—their temper has more of the oil of vitriol in it than of the oil of brotherly love. Nobody ever had any trouble except themselves! They declare no rival in the realm of suffering, but persecute their fellow sufferers with a kind of jealousy, as if they, alone, were the brides of suffering and others were mere intruders.

They think every other person's sorrow is a mere fancy or make-believe compared with theirs. They sit alone and keep silent. When they speak, their silence would have been preferable. It is a pity it should be so and yet so it is that men and women of a sorrowful spirit are frequently to be met with those who are unloving and unlovable. The more heartily, therefore, do I admire in true Christian people the Grace which sweetens them so that the more they suffer, the more gentle and patient they become with other sufferers and the more ready to bear whatever trouble may be involved in the necessities of compassion. Beloved, if you are much tried and troubled and if you are much depressed in spirit, entreat the Lord to prevent your becoming a killjoy to others. Remember your Master's rule, "And you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast."

I say not that our Lord spoke the word with the exact meaning I am now giving to it, but it is a kindred sense. Be cheerful even when your heart is sad. It is not necessary that every heart should be heavy because I am burdened—of what use would that be to me or to anyone else? No, let us try to be cheerful that we may be lovable, even if we still remain of a sorrowful spirit. Self and our own personal woes must not be our life psalm, nor our daily discourse. Others must be thought of and in *their* joys we must try to sympathize. In Hannah's case, too, the woman of a sorrowful spirit was a very gentle woman. Peninnah, with her harsh, haughty and arrogant speech, sorely vexed her to make her fret, but we do not find that she answered her.

At the annual festival, when Peninnah had provoked her the most, she stole away to the sanctuary to weep alone, for she was very tender and submissive. When Eli said, "How long will you be drunken? Put away your wine from you," she did not answer him tartly, as she might well have

done. Her answer to the aged priest is a model of submissiveness. Her answer to the aged priest is a model of gentleness. She most effectually cleared herself and plainly refuted the harsh imputation, but she made no retort and murmured no charge of injustice. She did not tell him that he was ungenerous in having thought so harshly, nor was there anger in her grief. She excused his mistake. He was an old man. It was his duty to see that worship was fitly conducted and, if he judged her to be in a wrong state, it was but faithfulness on his part to make the remark. And she took it, therefore, in the spirit in which she thought he offered it. At any rate, she bore the rebuke without resentment or repining.

Now, some sad people are very tart, very sharp, very severe and, if you misjudge them at all, they inveigh against your cruelty with the utmost bitterness. You are the unkindest of men if you think them less than perfect! With what an air and tone of injured innocence will they vindicate themselves! You have committed worse than blasphemy if you have ventured to hint a fault. I am not about to blame them, for we might be as ungentle as they if we were to be too severe in our criticism on the sharpness which springs of sorrow. But it is very beautiful when the afflicted are full of sweetness and light and, like the sycamore figs, are ripened by their bruising. When their own bleeding wound makes them tender of wounding others and their own hurt makes them more ready to bear what hurt may come through the mistakes of others, then have we a lovely proof that "sweet are the uses of adversity."

Look at your Lord. Oh that we all would look at Him, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again and who, when they mocked Him, had not a word of upbraiding, but answered by His prayers, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Don't you see much that is precious may go with a sorrowful spirit? There was more, however, than I have shown you, for Hannah was a thoughtful woman. Her sorrow drove her, first, within herself and next into much communion with her God. That she was a highly thoughtful woman appears in everything she says. She does not pour out that which first comes to hand. The product of her mind is evidently that which only a cultivated soil could yield.

I will not, just now, speak of her son further than to say that for loftiness of majesty and fullness of true poetry it is equal to anything from the pen of that sweet Psalmist of Israel, David himself. The Virgin Mary evidently followed in the wake of this great poetess, this mistress of the lyric are. Remember, also, that though she was a woman of a sorrowful spirit, she was a blessed woman. I might fitly say of her, "Hail, you that are highly favored! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women." The daughters of Belial could laugh and make merry and regard her as the dust beneath their feet, but yet she had, with her sorrowful spirit, found Grace in the sight of the Lord! There was Peninnah, with her quiver full of children, exulting over the barren mourner, yet Peninnah was not blessed, while Hannah, with all her griefs, was dear unto the Lord.

She seems to be somewhat like he of another age, of whom we read that Jabez was more honorable than his brethren because his mother bore

him with sorrow. Sorrow brings a wealth of blessing with it when the Lord consecrates it. And if one had to take his position with the merry or with the mournful, he would do well to take counsel of Solomon, who said, "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting." A present flash is seen in the mirth of the world, but there is vastly more true light to be found in the griefs of Christians. When you see how the Lord sustains and sanctifies His people by their afflictions, the darkness glows into noonday!

We come now to a second remark which is that much that is precious may come out of a sorrowful spirit—it is not only to be found *with* it—but may even *grow* out of it. Observe, first, that through her sorrowful spirit Hannah had learned to pray. I will not say but what she prayed before this great sorrow struck her, but this I know, she prayed with more intensity than before when she heard her rival talk so exceeding proudly and saw herself to be utterly despised. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if you have a secret grief, learn where to carry it and delay not to take it there! Learn from Hannah! Her appeal was to the Lord. She poured not out the secret of her soul into mortal ears, but spread her grief before God in His own house and in His own appointed manner!

She was in bitterness of soul and prayed to the Lord! Bitterness of soul should always be thus sweetened. Many are in bitterness of soul, but they do not pray and, therefore, the taste of the wormwood remains. O that they were wise and looked upon their sorrows as the Divine call for prayer, the cloud which brings a shower of supplication! Our troubles should be steeds upon which we ride to God—rough winds which hurry our boat into the haven of all-prayer! When the heart is merry we may sing Psalms, but concerning the afflicted it is written, "Let him pray." Thus, bitterness of spirit may be an index of our need of prayer and an incentive to that holy exercise. O daughter of sorrow, if in your darkened chamber you shall learn the art of prevailing with the Well-Beloved, yon bright-eyed maidens, down whose cheeks no tears have ever rushed, may well envy you, for to be proficient in the art and mystery of prayer is to be as a prince with God! May God grant that if we are of a sorrowful spirit, we may in the same proportion be of a *prayerful* spirit and we need scarcely desire a change.

In the next place, Hannah had learned self-denial. This is clear since the very prayer by which she hoped to escape out of her great grief was a self-denying one. She desired a son, that her reproach might be removed. But if her eyes might be blessed with such a sight she would cheerfully resign her darling to be the Lord's as long as he lived! Mothers wish to keep their children about them. It is natural that they should wish to see them often. But Hannah, when most eager for a man-child, asking but for *one* and that one as the special gift of God, yet does not seek him for herself, but for her God! She has it on her heart that as soon as she has weaned him, she will take him up to the house of God and leave him there as a dedicated child whom she can only see at certain festivals.

Read her own words—"O Lord of Hosts, if You will, indeed, look on the affliction of Your handmaid and remember me and not forget Your handmaid, but will give unto Your handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life and there shall no razor come upon his head." Her heart longs not to see her boy at home—his father's daily pride and her own hourly solace—but to see him serving as a Levite in the house of the Lord! She thus proved that she had learned self-denial. Brothers and Sisters, this is one of our hardest lessons—to learn to give up what we most prize at the command of God and to do so cheerfully. This is real self-denial when we, ourselves, make the proposition and offer the sacrifice freely as she did.

To desire a blessing that we may have the opportunity of *parting with it*—this is self-conquest—have we reached it? O you of a sorrowful spirit, if you have learned to crucify the flesh; if you have learned to keep under the body; if you have learned to cast all your desires and wills at His feet, you have gained what a thousand times repays you for all the losses and crosses you have suffered! Personally, I bless God for joy. I think I could sometimes do with a little more of it, but I fear, when I take stock of my whole life, that I have very seldom made any real growth in Grace except as the result of being dug about and fed by the stern husbandry of pain. My leaf is greenest in showery weather. My fruit is sweetest when it has been frosted by a winter's night.

Another precious thing had come to this woman and that was she had learned faith. She had become proficient in believing promises. It is very beautiful to note how, at one moment she was in bitterness, but as soon as Eli had said, "Go in peace and the God of Israel grant you your petition that you have asked of Him," "the woman went her way and did eat and her countenance was no more sad." She had not yet obtained the blessing, but she was persuaded of the promise and embraced it—after that Christly fashion which our Lord taught us when He said, "Believe that you have the petitions which you have asked and you shall have them." She wiped her tears and smoothed the wrinkles from her brow knowing that she was heard! By *faith* she held a man-child in her arms and presented it to the Lord.

This is no small virtue to attain. When a sorrowful spirit has learned to believe God, to roll its burden upon Him and to bravely expect succor and help from Him, it has learned by its *losses* how to make its best gains—by its griefs how to unfold its richest joys. Hannah is one of the honored band who, through faith, "received promises," therefore, O you who are of a sorrowful spirit, there is no reason why you should not, also, be of a *believing* spirit, even as she was! Still more of preciousness this woman of a sorrowful spirit found growing out of her sorrow, but with one invaluable item I shall close the list—she had evidently learned much of God. Driven from common family joys she had been drawn near to God and, in that heavenly fellowship, she had remained a humble waiter and watcher.

In seasons of sacred nearness to the Lord she had made many heavenly discoveries of His name and Nature, as her son makes us perceive. First,

she now knew that the heart's truest joy is not in children, nor even in mercies given in answer to prayer, for she began to sing, "My heart rejoices in the Lord"—not, "in Samuel"—but in Jehovah her chief delight was found. "My horn is exalted in the Lord"—not, "in that little one whom I have so gladly brought up to the sanctuary." No. She says in the first verse, "I rejoice in Your salvation," and it was even so. God was her exceeding joy and His salvation her delight. Oh, it is a great thing to be taught to put earthly things in their proper places and when they make you glad, yet to feel, "My gladness is in God; not in corn and wine and oil, but in the Lord Himself; all my fresh springs are in Him."

Next, she had also discovered the Lord's glorious holiness, for she sang, "There is none holy as the Lord." The wholeness of His perfect Character charmed and impressed her and she sang of Him as far above all others in His goodness. She had perceived His all-sufficiency. She saw that He is All in All, for she sang, "There is none beside You; neither is there any rock like our God." She had found out God's method in Providence, for how sweetly she sings, "The bows of the mighty men are broken and they that stumbled are girded with strength." She knew that this was always God's way—to overturn those who are strong in self and to set up those who are weak. It is God's way to unite the strong with weakness and to bless the weak with strength. It is God's peculiar way and He abides by it. The full He empties and the empty He fills. Those who boast of the power to live, He slays and those who faint before Him as dead, He makes alive.

She had also been taught the way and method of His Grace as well as of His Providence, for never did a woman show more acquaintance with the wonders of Divine Grace than she did when she sang, "He raises up the poor out of the dust and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes and to make them inherit the Throne of Glory." This, too, is another of those ways of the Lord which are only understood by His people. She had also seen the Lord's faithfulness to His people. Some Christians, even in these Gospel days, do not believe in the doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints, but she did! She sang, "He will keep the feet of His saints" and, Beloved, so He will, or none of them will ever stand! She had foreseen, also, somewhat of His kingdom and of the Glory of it. Her prophetic eyes, made brighter and clearer by her holy tears, enabled her to look into the future and looking, her joyful heart made her sing, "He shall give strength unto His King and exalt the horn of His Anointed."

And now, lastly, much that is precious will yet be given to those who are truly the Lord's, even though they have a sorrowful spirit. For, first, Hannah had her prayers answered. Ah, little could she have imagined, when Eli was rebuking her for drunkenness, that within a short time she should be there and the same priest would look at her with deep respect and delight because the Lord had favored her. And you, my dear Friend of a sorrowful spirit, would not weep so much, tonight, if you knew what is in store for you. You would not weep at all if you guessed how soon all will change and, like Sarah, you will laugh for very joy! You are very poor; you

scarcely know where you will place your head tonight; but if you knew in how short a time you will be among the angels, your penury would not cause you much distress!

You are sickening and pining away and will soon go to your last Home. You would not be so depressed if you remembered how bright, around your head, will shine the starry diadem and how sweetly your tongue shall pour forth heavenly sonnets such as none can sing but those who, like you, have tasted of the bitter waters of grief! It is better than before! It is better than before! Let these things cheer you if you are of a sorrowful spirit. There shall be a fulfillment of the things which God has promised to you. Eye has not seen, nor ear heard the things He has laid up for you, but His Spirit reveals them to you at this hour!

Not only did there come to Hannah, after her sorrow, an answered prayer, but Grace to use that answer. I do not think that Hannah would have been a fit mother for Samuel if she had not, first of all, been of a sorrowful spirit. It is not everybody that can be trusted to educate a young Prophet. Many a fool of a woman has made a fool of her child. He was so much her “duck” that he grew up to be a goose! It needs a wise woman to train up a wise son and, therefore, I regard Samuel’s eminent character and career as largely the fruit of his mother’s sorrow and as a reward for her griefs. Hannah was a thoughtful mother which was something and her thought induced diligence. She had slender space in which to educate her boy, for he left her early to wear the little coat and minister before the Lord. But in that space her work was effectually done, for the child Samuel worshiped the very day she took him up to the Temple.

In many of our homes we have a well-drawn picture of a child at prayer and such, I doubt not, was the very image of the youthful Samuel. I like to think of him with that little coat on—that linen ephod—coming forth in solemn style, as a child-servant of God to help in the services of the Temple. Hannah had acquired another blessing and that was the power to magnify the Lord. Those sweet songs of hers, especially that precious one which we have been reading—where did she get it from? I will tell you! You have picked up a shell, have you not, by the seaside and you have put it to your ear and heard it sing of the wild waves? Where did it learn this music? In the deeps! It had been tossed to and fro in the rough sea until it learned to talk with a deep, soft meaning of mysterious things which only the salt sea caves can communicate. Hannah’s poetry was born of her sorrow and if everyone here that is of a sorrowful spirit can but learn to tune his harp as sweetly as she tuned hers, he may be right glad to have passed through such griefs as she endured.

Moreover, her sorrow prepared her to receive further blessings, for after the birth of Samuel she had three more sons and two daughters—God thus giving her five for the one that she had dedicated to Him! This was grand interest for her loan—500 percent! Parting with Samuel was the necessary preface to the reception of other little ones. God cannot bless some of us till, first of all, He has tried us. Many of us are not fit to receive a great blessing till we have gone through the fire. Half the men that have

been ruined by popularity have been so ruined because they did not undergo a preparatory course of opprobrium and shame! Half the men who perish by riches do so because they had not toiled to earn them but made a lucky hit and became wealthy in an hour.

Passing through the fire anneals the weapon which afterwards is to be used in the conflict! And Hannah gained Divine Grace to be greatly favored by being greatly sorrowing. Her name stands among the highly-favored women because she was deeply sorrowing. Last of all, it was by suffering in patience that she became so brave a witness for the Lord and could so sweetly sing, "There is none holy as the Lord, neither is there any rock like our God." We cannot bear testimony unless we test the promise and, therefore, happy is the man whom the Lord tests and qualifies to leave a testimony to the world that God is true. To that witness I would set my own personal seal.

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THE KING'S WEIGHINGS

NO. 1736

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 26. 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL.**

***“Talk no more so exceedingly proud; let not arrogance come
out of your mouth, for the Lord is the God of knowledge
and by Him actions are weighed.”
1 Samuel 2:3.***

IT is very beautiful to see how the saints of old were accustomed to find comfort in their God. When they came into sore straits; when troubles multiplied; when helpers failed; when earthly comforts were removed, they were accustomed to go to the Lord and to the Lord alone. Thus Hannah thinks of the Lord and comforts herself in His name. By this means they were made strong and glad—they began to sing instead of sighing and to work wonders instead of fainting under their burdens even as here the Inspired poetess sings, “My heart rejoices in the Lord, my horn is exalted in the Lord.” To them God was a reality, a *present* reality, and they looked to Him as their rock of refuge, their helper and defense, a very present help in time of trouble.

Can we not, at the outset, learn a valuable lesson from their example? Let us do as they did—let us lean upon our God and stay ourselves upon Him when heart and flesh are failing. Does not the Apostle say, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice”? There is always cause for thankfulness that the Lord lives and that He is what He is, for “there is no rock like our God” and He is still ready to lay bare the arm of His strength on the behalf of them that serve Him. Oh, Believer, the fountain of your joy is never dried up! If, like Jonah, your gourds are withered, yet your God is living! If, like Job, your goods have been plundered, yet the highest good is still your own! Are the rivers dry? Yet is this ocean full! Are the stars hidden? Yet the heavenly sun shines on in his eternal brightness! You have a possession that is unbinding, a promise that is unailing, a protector who is unchanging!

Though you dwell in a faithless world, you also dwell in a faithful God! Your trials are present and so is your Helper, who has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” As the bird to the woods, and the cony to the rocks, so let your soul flee away unto the Lord, your Refuge. “Straightforward makes the best runner”—do not beat the bush and go about to friends and cry, “Have pity upon me! Have pity upon me!” but, “turn to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope.” As for the son of man whose breath is in his nostrils, in which is he to be accounted? Men are vanity in the hour of distress! Miserable comforters are they all. “Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm.” The heath in the desert which sees neither dew nor rain is the fit image of this spiritual idolater.

“Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord and whose hope the Lord is, for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat comes.” Oh, learn to live upon the Lord alone! Hannah, who was once a woman of a sorrowful spirit, had so learned to delight herself in God that she could dwell upon the different points of the Divine Character with joyful adoration. Like others of God’s instructed people, she was very happy in the thought of God’s holiness. Notice the second verse—“There is none holy as the Lord.” I have heard many persons praise the Lord for His goodness, but it is a far higher and surer mark of Grace when a man can praise the Lord for His *holiness*. Is it not noteworthy that in Heaven, the abode of happiness, which happiness springs mainly out of the Presence of their God, the adoration of the blessed chiefly tends to this point—the reverent celebration of His holiness?

We read of the seraphim, “And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.” We read, again, in Revelation, concerning the living creatures, “They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” Are you conscious that you are *unholy*? Then, O Believer, rejoice that God is holy! Are those around you unholy? Is your soul among lions? Do you dwell among those that are set on the fires of Hell? Yet say, as the Lord Jesus did, “You are holy, O You that inhabits the praises of Israel.” Does it seem as if unholiness covered all things, breaking forth like a flood and deluging the earth with its black and filthy waters? Yet the Lord sits upon the Throne of His holiness and cuts asunder the cords of the wicked! Let this be our song in the night—“There is none as holy as the Lord.”

Hannah also tuned her heart to celebrate the power of Jehovah, saying, “Neither is there any rock like our God.” One of the leading ideas in the metaphor of a rock is strength, abiding endurance, unmoving stability, unconquerable power. Let us also rejoice in the Lord God Almighty and delight in the mighty God of Jacob, the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle! Even His finger brought plagues upon the Egyptians. And as for His hand, it utterly overthrew them! The Lord God Omnipotent is the joy of His people, for the Lord is our strength and song. He also has become our salvation. He shall surely show Himself strong on the behalf of all them that put their trust in Him. Fly, then, O timid Soul, to the cover of Jehovah’s wings! Abide under the shadow of the Almighty and His Divine power shall cause you to lie down in safety.

Oh, for a well-tuned harp to celebrate these two attributes so terrible to the ungodly, so full of exultation to those who are saved by Grace! Hannah touched, in her rapturous hymn, upon the wisdom of the Lord, and sang thus, “For the Lord is the God of knowledge,” or of, “knowledges,” for every kind of knowledge is with Him. We are not among those who impiously ask, “How does God know?” Or, “Is there knowledge in the Most High?” We are assured that nothing past, present, or future is hidden from the eternal eyes! In His knowledge there is no error and to it there is no limit. The Lord knows them that are His and He knows the way that

they take. He knows how to deliver His people and when to bring them out of the furnace. Reverently do we worship the Lord and say, "O Lord, You have searched me, and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thoughts afar off. You compass my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, You know it altogether. You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it!"

Let us rejoice that our God is not unconscious, or ignorant. And when our own ignorance grieves us, let us rejoice that the Lord will teach us and what we do not know, now, we shall know hereafter. Hannah also derived comfort from the fact that God is strictly just, for she says with delight, "By Him actions are weighed." It is to this that I would turn your attention. May the Holy Spirit direct our meditations. Justice is a very terrible attribute to the unforgiven, to those who are not justified by the righteousness of Christ—and even on God's own people it turns a heart-searching glance at times.

I. The staple of our discourse will consist of a consideration of THE PROCESS OF DIVINE JUDGMENT, which is continually going on—"The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed." The figure of weighing suggests a thorough testing and an accurate estimating of the matters under consideration. Solomon says, "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirits." God sees men's actions, notes them, thinks upon them and deliberately forms an estimate of them. "For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord and He ponders all his goings."

Our first note here shall stand thus—this is not as man dreams. Many imagine that God takes no note of what is done among the sons of men. Indeed, their god does not appear to be a personal, intelligent existence at all. Or, if intelligent, they boast that he is too great to mark the trivial actions of men—that is to say—in order to make their god great, they would make him blind! Their idea of his greatness would seem to be loftiness, impassiveness and a measure of ignorance. Our notion of greatness is the reverse—we believe in the great God to whom all things are known and by whom the least matters are observed! Our God is neither unobservant nor indifferent. "He humbles Himself to behold the things that are in Heaven and in the earth!" He is constantly observant of all that is done in Heaven above, in the earth beneath and in all deep places.

Each movement of the tiniest worm upon the sea bottom is marked by Him, together with the migration of fishes, the flight of birds and the falling of the sear leaves. There are no forces so minute as to be beneath His notice, no movements so rapid as to escape His observation. The Psalmist says, "Yes, the darkness hides not from You; but the night shivers as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to You." The atheist cries, "No god" and he who would deny universal knowledge to God is twin brother to him! As good have no god at all as a god who does not know. "Jehovah is the God of knowledge and by Him actions are weighed." This text plainly rebukes those who say God is too merciful to take much ac-

count of what *we* do—poor creatures that we are—shot out of the back of a tumbrel into the midst of a society all in chaos which tempts us to indulge the passions of our nature! They dream that God will surely wink at such inconsiderable things as the actions of men! But surely it is not so, since it is written, “The Lord is the God of knowledge and by Him actions are weighed.”

The Lord our God is merciful, but this mercy is consistent with the severest justice—He pardons sin, but He never suffers it to go unpunished! Strange as the statement may seem, the Lord never ceases to be the righteous Judge, even when He is passing by transgression. The great and glorious God does not forgive sin because He does not know of it, or does not remember how sinful it is—but this is the wonder of His mercy—He blots out the sins of His people with the fullest knowledge of their foulness! After having weighed sin, noted its motive, marked its meaning and considered its consequences, the Lord nevertheless forgives it for Jesus’ sake. Do not fall into any error on this point, or imagine that the Lord thinks little of human guilt and, therefore, readily pardons it. No! “The Lord is the God of knowledge and by Him actions are weighed.”

Consider, next, that this form of procedure is not as man judges. By men, actions are judged flippantly, but, “by God actions are weighed.” By men, actions are more frequently *counted*. Such a man has done this, and that, and that, and that, and that—what a wonderful man he is! Yes, but by God, human deeds are not so much measured in the bushel as weighed in the scale. A man’s life may be made up of countless bubbles, each one brilliant as the rainbow—but what a collapse there will be when the Lord comes with the balances to weigh the deeds done in the body! By men, actions are frequently measured as to apparent bulk, and persons placed in certain positions bulk very largely upon the public mind. Their doings fill the newspapers though they are empty enough in themselves. You scarcely get a day’s issue of a journal but what something is reported of a man of mark—not that what he has done is by any means surprisingly good, or wise, or benevolent, but it is done by *him* and, therefore, it must be emblazoned. Men and women must have something to talk about and certain persons are selected for observation and, therefore, to their lives an exaggerated importance is attached.

Let no such person delude himself! At the bar of Divine Justice, the acts of princes and peasants, of lords and laborers, shall have an equal trial and shall be tested in the same scales! Apparent greatness shrivels before the Divine balance! Measure a cloud by its volume and it is vast. But condense it and how small is the weight of the water! When our lives shall be freed from vapor and judged by their solid contents, how small will some of us appear! Constantly men measure actions by their brilliance. Oh, it was a splendid action! It was so dashing, so unlooked for, so extraordinary! Was it right and pure and holy? If not, the light of genius cannot save it from condemnation! He who gave £10,000 to a fund did a brilliant act of charity. And yet the legacy may not have weighed so much as the two mites that made a farthing which were all the poor widow’s living.

He who silently adores the Lord may have given Him a greater weight of praise than he whose charming voice led the great congregation. The godly life of a poor bedridden woman may have been more highly esteemed by the Lord than the flaming eloquence of the great preacher. Ah me! How easily we are deceived by appearances! But not so the Lord, for, "By Him actions are weighed." Men are exceedingly apt to measure actions by their consequences. How wrong it is to measure actions by results, rather than by their own intrinsic character. A man upon the railway neglected to turn a switch, but, by the care of another, no accident occurred. Is he to be excused? Another man was equally negligent, certainly not more so, but in his case the natural result followed—there was a collision and many lives were lost. This last man was blamed most deservedly, but yet the former offender was equally guilty!

If we do wrong and no harm comes of it, we are not thereby justified. Yes, if we did evil and good came of it, the evil would be just as evil! It is not the *result* of the action but the action itself which God weighs! He who swindles and prospers is just as vile as he whose theft lodged him in prison. He who acts uprightly and becomes a loser thereby, is just as honored before God as if his honesty had led on to wealth. If we seek to do good and fail in our endeavor, we shall be accepted for the attempt and not condemned for the failure! You have all admired Grace Darling because of her gallant act in rescuing mariners from a wreck—but suppose she had not saved a single sailor—and had herself been drowned? Would she not have been equally a heroine? Of course she would! Her *success* had nothing to do with the excellence of her actions—the moral weight of her conduct lay in the self-sacrificing courage which led her on such a howling, murky night to risk her life upon the cruel waters for her unknown fellow men! Had she been swallowed up by the remorseless deep, her actions would have weighed as much before the Throne of God as when she landed the saved ones at the lighthouse.

If a man gives his life to convert the heathen and he does *not* succeed, he shall have as much reward from God as he who turns a nation to the faith. Two ministers have labored in the same field—the first preached the Gospel faithfully, but saw scant results. The second, following him, found the rough work done and reaped full sheaves from the field. The thoughtless are apt to think the second man greatly superior to the first, but it is not so—one sows and another reaps. When God comes to weigh the actions of men, He may give greater praise to the sower than to the reaper. We have odd ways of measuring up our fellow men—odd, I mean, as compared with our self-measurement. Usually we have two sets of weights—one for ourselves and a second for our friends. When we place ourselves in the scale, we weigh pretty heavily—we are full weight, and a little bit over! It is very different with our fellow men—they may really weigh more than we do, but we adjust the machine in such a way that it is greatly to their disadvantage. I am not an admirer of the machine called a "steel yard," for it is singularly easy to fix it according to your wishes and certainly our estimates of others are as easily affected by prejudice. But by

God, "actions are weighed" truly, honestly, righteously—and the result is very different from the judgment of men.

I would now have you note that this weighing is a very searching business. "By Him actions are weighed." A man enters a goldsmith's shop and says, "Here is old gold to sell. See, I have quite a lot of it." "Yes," says the goldsmith, "let me weigh it." "Weigh it? Why, look at the quantity! It fills this basket!" What is the goldsmith doing? Looking for his weights and certain acids by which he means to test the metal. When he has used his acids, he puts the trinkets into the scale. "You are not going to buy by weight?" "I never buy in any other way," says the goldsmith. "But there is such a *quantity*." "That may be, but I buy by weight." It is always so with God in all our actions—He estimates their real weight. We may hammer out our little gold and make a great show of it, but the Lord is not mocked or deceived. Every dealing between us and God will have to be by a just balance and standard weight.

And in what way will He weigh it? The weights are somewhat of this sort. The standard is His just and holy Law and all which falls short of that is sin. Any lack of conformity to the Law of God is sin and by so much our acts are found wanting. Remember this, you who would justify yourselves! The Lord also enquires how much of sincerity is found in the action. You acted in such a manner and therein you were right—but did you do this in pretense, or from force, or in sincerity and in truth? In worship did you heartily adore? In charity did you give cheerfully? Did your heart go with your voice and hand? You prayed so long but did your heart truly pray? You attended so many religious services, but did you personally attend them, or did you send your chrysalis and leave the living thing at home? Yes, you preached the Truth of God—but did you believe it in your own soul? You gave your gold—was it with the motive of doing good, or that your name might be on a list, or because it would not look well for your name to be left out? That which is not done sincerely has no weight in it! It is weighed in the balances and found wanting.

The Lord also weighs actions according to their motives. He asks not only *what* you did, but *why* you did it? Was self the motive force? The preacher weighs his sermon, this morning, and asks his conscience whether he seeks only the glory of God. Will not you, my Brothers and Sisters, weigh what *you* are doing in this world? To what end are you living? What wind is filling your sails? You have been kept from outward transgressions. Your life has been moral and pure in the sight of men—but have you lived for God's glory? Have you sought to obey God and please Him? Have you been moved by love to God and man? Have you been in heart, God's servant? If not, if another motive has ruled you, you are his servant whom you have obeyed.

The motive which lies at the fountainhead colors all the streams of action and God, who judges us, not according to what is done externally, but according to what is meant internally, will make short work of a great multitude of human virtues! When you cannot find a fault with a day's life as to what you have outwardly done, it may yet be faulty all through because of the reason which actuated you. When you sum up your actions

at night, Pride may lean over your shoulder and whisper, "You have done well today!" At such a time it may be well for Conscience to awaken itself and ask, "But was this done purely for the Lord's glory and in dependence upon His Grace?" An ill motive will poison all!

Another mode of judging is by our spirit and temper. If we live proudly, our actions lose weight. If we act from envy and will, we fall short. If we are flippant, inconsiderate, prayerless, we spoil all. The odor of actions is a great thing—if they are not steeped in Grace they miss acceptance. An inch of Grace has more weight in it than a mile of nature! To be in the fear of the Lord is solid living—all else is froth. Sometimes actions may be weighed by the circumstances which surround them. Men are not to be considered good if their surroundings forbid their being what they would like to be. "As a man thinks in his heart, so he is." Yonder man has been strictly truthful. Yes, but he could not have made a sixpence by being false, or it may be he would have lied. Another man is placed where the whole custom of his trade is trickery, but he takes a firm stand and, at great risk, refuses to swerve from strict integrity. Now, this second man will bear weighing, but the first will not.

Are not some children so carefully brought up from their childhood, happily for them, that their character is never discovered until they get out into life and are tempted? And then it is seen that the truthful boy was a little hypocrite and the thoughtful girl was as frivolous as any of the giddy throng. So you see that the fruit of tender culture may not always be what it should be or what it seems to be. It is wonderful how amiable we all are until we are irritated! What a deal of patience we have when we have no sickness to bear! I had enough and to spare till my pains multiplied—and then my stock ran very low. I am afraid that most of us have a great quantity of fictitious goodness which arises out of our favorable circumstances and has no other foundation. Now God judges with this before Him, for He places some men into peculiar difficulties and others in positions of special advantage. And this He takes into account in the weighing.

Some men cannot run in the crooked road because they are lame and inactive—let them not lay a flattering unction to their souls and dream that they excel in goodness! Many a man thinks himself a Joseph, but the only reason is that no Potiphar's wife has tried him! Many a man has never been tempted because no wedge of gold or goodly Babylonian garment has come in his way. Multitudes of men are honest because they never had a chance of making a grand haul by setting up a bubble company—which is the modern mode of thieving. The lion in the Zoological Gardens is very good because he is behind iron bars—and many a man's goodness owes more to the iron bars of his position than to his own heart and motive.

Another weight to put in the scale is this—Was there any godliness about your life? I may be speaking to men in Exeter Hall whose lives are such that they think themselves examples, but their lives are spoiled from end to end by a grievous flaw. This point must be enquired into. You are to be weighed by God and this will be the main matter—Has God been

recognized in your life? O Sirs, I fear that many of you are fitly described by David—"God is not in all their thoughts." You have lived from childhood to manhood, and from manhood to old age, but God has not been considered in any of your actions! You have had great respect to society and to the law of the land, but if there has been *no* God, you would not have acted otherwise than you have done—God has not been an active agent in the influences which have moved you conduct! Your life has wandered from its true end which has not God for its leading star. If you have not lived for your God, for whom have you lived? You are His creature—have you never served your Creator? You say that Christ is your Redeemer but how has He redeemed you if you live unto yourself—and not as one that is bought with a price? This is the enquiry to test us all! Is God the main objective of our living? Do we throw ourselves with intensity into the pursuit of that which will glorify His blessed name? If not, the scales of the sanctuary will soon discover that we are sadly wanting!

Once more—have we lived by faith? Without faith it is impossible to please God! And if there is no faith in our life, then we are worth nothing! Hear me, O Man, and answer these questions! Have you believed in God and done *anything* because of believing in Him? Have you trusted in Jesus Christ as your Savior and has this faith cleansed your way and purged your thoughts? Have you believed the promises of God and His Covenant? Has your life been ordered according to this belief? If not, you are weighed and rejected! Without faith in Him whom God has sent, you cannot be acceptable with God! Thus, you see, in different ways, God searches deeply into the life of man, and woe to that man who cannot bear the weighing—the greater his pretensions the more terrible his dismay when the scales refuse him.

This weighing of our lives must be exceedingly accurate because it is done personally by God, Himself. Notice my text—"The Lord is the God of knowledge and by Him actions are weighed." One might not mind the text if it said actions are weighed by Gabriel, for he is fallible—an *angel* might make mistakes and he might wink and be partial. But when it is written that by God, Himself, actions are weighed, O Man, there is no possibility of bribing this great Tester of your life—He will judge righteous judgment! He is the God of knowledge and, therefore, He knows not only your outward deeds, but your secret designs and desires.

Moreover, He knows the standard of right—with *Him* are the weights and the scales. Therefore knowing what our actions are and what they ought to be, He readily enough discovers our discrepancies and mistakes—and there will be no possibility of our escaping His Infallible decision. I am amazed we are so ready to deceive ourselves as we are. I marvel that so many count it worth their while to deceive their fellow Christians and their ministers! It is a poor ambition to live a life of deceit. Be what you seem to be and seem to be what you are! But oh, if we could cheat ourselves throughout life, and deceive all those who watch us, yet we could never *once* have deceived God, "for by Him actions are weighed" so accurately that a mistake is never made!

Ah me! I fear that many professors live a life of utter lies, comforting themselves with them. I once heard a story, (I do not know if it is true), of an old banker who said to his son to whom he bequeathed the business, "This is the key of our large iron safe—take great care of it. The bank depends upon that safe. Let the people see that you have such a safe, but never open it unless the bank should be in the utmost difficulty." The bank went on all right as long as the iron safe was fast closed, but, at last, there came a run upon it. In his greatest extremity the young gentleman opened it—and he found nothing at all in it! That was the stock of the bank—poverty carefully concealed; imaginary wealth winning confidence—and living on the results.

Are there not many persons who, all their lives, are doing a spiritual banking business and deriving a considerable income of reputation from that which will turn out to be nothing? Beware of driving a trade for eternity upon fictitious capital, for failure will be the sure result! Time tries most things, but eternity tries all. Who among us would care to trade without capital? Who would go to sea in a rotten boat painted to look seaworthy? How wise it is to invite Divine inspection that we may not be deceived! What a dreadful thing it is that so many professing Christian people are never willing to open the iron safe! They do not want to know whether all is right between God and themselves—they prefer to go on saying, "Peace, peace." They love the lullaby of, "It is well; it is well." Preach sweetly-comforting sermons and they will be well content—and truly they might wisely be content if it were not written, "By Him actions are weighed." God will not be charmed by our self-approving songs—He will weigh us and our actions—and reveal us before the sun.

Again, I want you to notice that this weighing is carried on at this present—"By Him actions are weighed." Not only shall they be weighed at the Last Great Day, but every minute they are *being* weighed. How stupid is a hypocrite if he believes that he has never once deceived God! He knelt in prayer, but he did not pray. God knew that he did not and perceived the insult. At worship he sang with the assembly, but his heart was never in communion with God, and the Lord knew it. He never established a good reputation within Heaven. His conduct was understood at all times and he was always branded as false-hearted. A man has joined the Christian Church—he has risen in esteem till he has become an officer among his brethren—yet all the while he was never converted, Grace was never in his soul. Does he think that God is taken in by him? Let him not be deceived! The Lord has gone on weighing all his acts as they have happened—and He has put them all aside as of short weight.

As at the bank all moneys are put through a process by which the light coins are detected, so our life always passes over the great weighing machine of the Lord's Justice and He separates that which is short in weight from that which is precious, doing this at the moment as Infallibly as at Judgment Day! "By Him actions are weighed." Please remember, dear Hearers, that this is true of all of us—not only of open sinners, but of those who are considered saints. You are getting old I see, my Friend, but not too old to have your actions weighed! Old age is venerable, it cannot

screen you from inspection. "Oh," said an old man the other day, "you can trust *me!* I am past temptation." Gray hairs should not talk such nonsense! You can still be tempted and your actions are still weighed as well as those of that silly boy whom you blame for his rashness. And you, good Sir, who have been a professor of religion for 40 years and who, when you rise up to pray, stand like a cedar in the garden of God—your actions are still examined! And if you are rotten at heart, it is no matter how green you seem to be with the verdure of apparent Grace—you will, in due time, be detected and destroyed!

The preacher, here, is being daily weighed and he knows it! And so are all the members of this Church! And however excellent our outward lives may be, we must still pass through the testing house. Not one of us shall escape from the upright judgment of the Most High. And one day, to conclude this point, the King's weighings will be published—set up where men and angels shall read them! Oh, can you bear it that the whole of the secrets of your soul should be made public in the marketplace of the universe? That the actions which seemed so admirable should have their secret motives searched out and should be seen to be leprous with selfishness? Can you endure to have your secret sins laid bare? Your private designs, deep intentions and evil purposes set out in the open daylight? Can you bear to have your envying, jealousies, plots, lies, all held up to public gaze? With what shame will the wicked cover their faces when all their hidden things shall be read out and published through the streets of the universe! Then shall they be ashamed and confounded, while everlasting contempt shall be poured upon them.

Most of all will men be ashamed who came into the Church of God and wore Christ's livery, but all the while were servants of Satan! And of these, most of all the *ministers* who climbed into pulpits, professing to preach Christ, and all the while declared their own vain thoughts instead of the Gospel of salvation! How will men gaze on the unmasked! When the visors are knocked off and all their masquerade shall be over, how will men despise the hypocrites! They looked like kings, but, behold, the puppets were nothing but beggars! They seemed pure and holy, but a ray from the sun of the Truth of God has revealed their ulcered inner life and all holy intelligences shrink from them! Oh, what discoveries there will be in that day when the record of the King's weighings shall be read of men and angels!

II. It is now time for me to observe THE HUMBLING NATURE OF THIS CONSIDERATION. "Talk no more so exceedingly proud; let not arrogance come out of your mouth, for the Lord is the God of knowledge and by Him actions are weighed." The fact of Divine Judgment on ourselves should forever prevent our insulting others. When you see anyone found out in wrong-doing, do not act as if you were his executioner. When you pass by a person who has lost his or her character, do not straighten your back and disdainfully regard him as the mire of the streets. Do not act the part of the very superior person. "By *Him* actions are weighed."

Your actions are none too good. Perhaps there is not so much difference between you and the person whom you condemn, if all were known.

You and the sinful one are not the least alike as to your outside wrappings and labeling, for you are labeled, "saint," and she is labeled, "a fallen woman." But if all were known, and all is known by God—the man without fault—who would dare to cast the first stone is *not* sitting in your seat! Ah, how the fact that we are, ourselves, to be judged, should make us speak with bated breath when we are tempted to judge others! Let us not judge one another any more, for the Judge is at the door and, "by His actions are weighed." Let us leave judging to the Judge! Let everyone look to himself and let no man despise his neighbor.

Next, I think we must give up all idea of speaking proudly in the Presence of God. Our good works—what are they when weighed? They look very pretty, indeed, as we set them out in array—but when God puts them into the scales, they look very different. We thought we weighed *something*, but in the scales they seem turned into feathers! Our good works are high up in the air and we are disappointed to see that the Law of God is not lifted up by all that we have done. I remember a good man who said, when he was dying, that he once began to separate his good works from his bad works. But he found them so much like one another, in the light of eternity, that he ceased separating them and threw them all away, determined to float to Heaven on the Cross of Christ.

This was wisely done, for our best things are so stained with sin and the whole of a holy life is worth so little in the way of merit, that the shortcut of the whole matter is just to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and rest ourselves on Jesus Christ alone. Dear Friend, if ever you have had the weighing process carried on in your own heart, I know you have given up all hope of being saved by your own merit or strength! If conscience has been awakened and if the Law of God has fulfilled its office upon you, you have given up all idea of appearing before God in your own righteousness! The man who boasts that he is perfect in the flesh either fails to weigh himself at all, or else he is in great need of a visit from the inspector, for his weights and scales are sadly out of repair.

It is very easy to appear perfect if you have an imperfect standard to measure by—but when the Lord Himself weighs us by His Law, we cry out, "Who can understand his errors?" We have nothing with which to glory before God! The perfect Character of our Lord Jesus Christ shuts our mouths as to all self-congratulation and compels us to fall at His feet in deep humiliation! May the Lord carry on the weighing process in your consciences till you glory only in the *Lord* and every false, pretentious thing is banished forever!

III. In closing, let us briefly consider THE POSITION IN WHICH ALL THIS LEAVES US. If God weighs our actions and we are, thereby, found wanting, and can only cry, "Guilty" in His sight, what then? Then we are in God's hands! That is where I wish every one of my Hearers felt himself to be. But who is the Lord? First, according to Hannah, He is a God of salvation! "My spirit has rejoiced in Your salvation." Salvation for sinners, salvation for the guilty, salvation for those that are weighed in the balance and found wanting! Free pardon, full remission, gracious acceptance even for the worst and vilest—this is the Gospel of the blessed God! How sweet

to be in the hands of a God who is able to save—and *delights* to save—and makes it His glory to save!

Next, according to Hannah's song, He is the God who delights in reversing the order of things. He throws down those who are high and sets up those that are down. "He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty." Is not that a hint to you to be empty, to be hungry, to be poor and needy? If God is going to pick men from the dung-hill and set them among princes, even the princes of His people, then the surest road to princely preferment is *consciously* to take your place on the dunghill! If the shields of the mighty are broken, but the weak are girded with strength, then it is wise to be weak before the Lord! Down, pride! Down! Down! Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God and He shall exalt you in due time!

Once more, this God is one who delights to carry on strange processes in the hearts of His people. "The Lord kills, and makes alive: He brings down to the grave, and brings up. The Lord makes poor, and makes rich; He brings low, and lifts up." This is God's way of making men live—He kills them! This is God's way of giving them resurrection—He brings them to the grave! This is God's way of making men rich—He first makes them poor! This is God's way of lifting men up—they are first brought down! Are you brought down this morning? Be of good courage—this is the royal road to comfort in Christ Jesus! Is the Holy Spirit making you conscious of sin? He does so that you may be conscious of pardon! Do you feel condemned? The Lord condemns you, now, that you may not be condemned with the world! Are you evil, foul and vile in your own sight? It is that you may wash and be whiter than snow through the Lord Jesus!

Oh how I rejoice to meet with a real sinner! Sham sinners are a vexation, but those who are really and truly so are precious in our sight! We hear of the bona fide traveler—give me the bona fide sinner—

***"A sinner is a sacred thing
The Holy Spirit has made him so."***

He who is made to feel that he is truly lost is well-near saved! Christ died for such. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." O you who are really a sinner, catch at that word! God grant you may find salvation now, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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THE ROAD TO HONOR NO. 1811

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 12, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Those who honor Me I will honor, and those who
despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.”
1 Samuel 2:30.***

OUR chickens generally come home to roost. Our thoughts of other men become other men's thoughts of us. According as we measure out to our fellows, so do they measure back into our bosoms, for good or for evil. So especially, in reference to the Lord, Himself, the God of Justice sooner or later causes a man to reap his own sowing and gather his own scattering. See how the Lord keeps touch with His friends and foes and pays them in their own coin—“Those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.” A man's life is often its own echo. He sinned and he suffered after the likeness of his sin—you may see the sin in the punishment—as you see, today the footprint of the Egyptian dog in the brick which he trod upon when it was yet soft clay. The man sinned again, for it is the nature of sin to repeat itself and grow into habit and, behold, another sorrow was born in the likeness of that other sin! Thus the man lived in the present and formed his future life by one and the same act. He spoke and the echoes spoke to him in the years following. So does life repeat itself. So does the seed develop the flower and the flower again produce the seed. It is an endless chain, for the thing that has been, is the thing which shall be! A man may live to see a grim procession of all his old sins marching past him, robed in the sackcloth and ashes wherein Justice dooms them to be arrayed.

So is it also with our joys. God gives us joy after the similitude of our service. Godly Fear fills her garden with many flowers and her house with music of different kinds. And the Lord appoints to her that she shall live of her ministry and that her oxen shall eat of the good corn which they tread out for others. When we have been faithful to God, He is always faithful to us and sends us a full reward. If we walk contrary to Him, He will walk contrary to us. But if we delight ourselves in Him, He will delight Himself in us to do us good. There is goodwill to men of good will, and evil shall slay those whose lives are evil.

If you wish to see this exemplified in Scripture, how many instances rise before you! Enoch walks with God because God pleases him and then we find that he pleases God! Noah obediently rests the issues of his life upon the Truth of God and God gives him rest. Abraham was famous for trusting God and it is wonderful how God trusted him! The Lord seemed to put His honor as well as His oracles into the guardianship and custody

of Abraham. "Shall I," says God, "hide this thing that I will do from Abraham, my friend?" Oh, no! God spills His heart out to Abraham, for Abraham has spilled out his heart to God! See, on the other hand, Jacob. He is a good man and true—and I do not like to speak of the failings of the faithful. There is a Ham-like propensity in some, to point out the nakedness of God's saints, and it is much better to go backward and cover them with the garment of love. Yet we cannot help seeing that Jacob was not so in harmony with God as he should have been and, therefore, his life lacked the majestic serenity which attended Abraham's.

He begins life by bargaining and by cheating his brother and all his life he was bargained with and cheated beyond his heart's content. His cunning came home to him—what he was to Esau, Laban was to him. Yet, as he wrestled with the Angel in mighty prayer, the Lord gave him the wrestler's name of honor. And as he trusted in the Lord, even in his saddest estate, the Lord preserved him to the end. As an instance on the other side, take Moses. He would not be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, but gave up all prospect of a kingdom in Egypt. But what did he get? He became a greater king than any Pharaoh! He led, through the wilderness, a nation compared with which the Egyptians are mere barbarians! He had all the rank and dignity that could fall to the greatest ruler of his age or of any other age—and his honor after death is, to this day, infinitely beyond that of all the Pharaohs rolled into one. Moses is an imperial name—among them that are born of woman, whose fame is greater? He is no loser—he honored God and he was honored.

Take David, on the other side, and see how his transgressions came home to him. I will not speak of the better character of David, just now, though that would abundantly illustrate how God repays His faithful ones. But, when David sinned, the sorrows that embittered the latter end of his life were the reflection of his own offenses. One is struck with the family likeness between David's sins and sorrows. Remember the names of Absalom and Adonijah and you cannot forget the lust and the falsehood of him to whom these young men were both sons and punishments.

Very striking as an instance of the retaliation of Providence is the case of Adonibezek. When they cut off his thumbs and his big toes, so that he might lose all power to draw the bowstring and all power, indeed, to go to battle at all because he could not stand safely in the conflict, he confessed that 40 kings to whom he had done the same thing had picked up crumbs under his table. It was his own remark that, as he had done, God had requited him. Samuel, when he smote Agag, told him that, as his sword had made women childless, so should the sword of the Lord, that day, make his mother childless by slaying him. Most memorable of all is the instance of Haman and his gallows, 50 cubits high. See how he swings on it! He built the gallows for Mordecai. Ah, no—he built it for himself!

Thus are deeds reflected upon those who do them! Thus do the cruel fall into the pits which their own hands have dug! Malice uses a sort of Providential boomerang. The man flings it with all his force at the foe and it comes back to him—not into his hand, that he may use it again, but across his brow to smite him even to the dust! Take heed what you put into the measure that you mete out to others—and especially to God—for,

“with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you, again.” “Those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.”

I want to speak, this evening, very practically and to the point. I shall therefore allow but little garnishing and simply deal out the plain truth. May the Spirit of God make the meditation useful to us all!

I. And, first, we will speak upon THE DUTY INCUMBENT UPON US ALL, but especially upon God’s people, OF HONORING THE LORD. As we are God’s creatures, we are bound to honor God. Think of what He is in Himself. He is such a One that if we had no relation to Him, but had simply heard of Him by the hearing of the ears, we should be bound to honor Him. So perfectly holy, so inconceivably gracious, so full of everything that makes up perfection, so devoid of any fault or failure, the infinitely glorious Jehovah should be—must be—honored by every right-minded man. But then, as He is our Creator and we owe our very existence to Him, it becomes us to pay Him reverence. “It is He that made us, and not we, ourselves.”

He is our Preserver—“We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.” He feeds and leads us every day. Some of you people of God ought, indeed, to honor God with all your hearts because you know that you are His children—and to you, adoption yields a fullness of rich comfort. He asks, “If I am a Father, where is My honor?” He has chosen you and put you among His children—will you not honor Him? The Father has loved you with an infinite love! The Son of God has poured out His heart’s blood for you! The Spirit of God has tenderly strived with you and, even now, dwells in you—will you not honor the Triune Jehovah? Think of the relationship which Grace has established between you and the Ever-Blessed One and, in deepest gratitude, you will confess that you are bound to honor the Lord your God!

Among those who bow lowest before Him, let us be found. If we have crowns of any sort. If any honor or good repute belongs to us, let us cast all at His feet! Angels with veiled faces adore the Lord—let us veil our faces with the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ and worship Him that lives forever and ever! To Him, the cherubim and seraphim lift up their ceaseless cry—let us, also, unite in joyous praise before the Lord our God! Surely none of you would deny the obligation that rests upon every creature, but especially upon every *regenerate* creature, to bless and praise and honor the Lord our God! I shall not stop, dear Friends, to enter into any argument upon a subject which commends itself to every conscience. If your hearts are right, you feel that to honor God is your joy. I know that you love to glorify Him. His praise is viewed by you, not only as a duty, but as a privilege and a delight! Oh for more of the power of the Holy Spirit, that we may glorify God by His own Spirit!

Just notice *how* we ought to honor Him and consider wherein this duty lies. We should honor Him *by confessing His Deity*—I mean the Deity of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The Athanasian Creed is too long and it enters too much into details, but, in the essence of it, it is most solemn Truths of God and, though I should not dare to say that the man who did not believe every word of it would, “without doubt, perish

everlastingly,” yet I should feel great trembling for myself if I could not, from the depths of my heart, subscribe to the blessed Doctrine of the Trinity in Unity—one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. “The Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God; and yet there are not three Gods but one God.” In the way in which God reveals Himself, let us honor Him by accepting His own Revelation.

We must honor God by receiving that view of Him which He deigns to grant us. What know you and I of God? We are nothing—how should we comprehend the All in All? We are insects begotten and buried within a few hours—how shall the creatures of a day understand the Eternal? Men talk about what God must be or should be. What do they know? Can the dust beneath our feet form a just judgment of the stars? It might do so much more readily than *we* can form any idea of God save that which He is pleased to impart to us by His own Revelation. Let us adore Jehovah as we find Him in the Old and New Testaments! If there are any that deny the Deity of the Lord Jesus, let us not come into their secret, nor in any respect be joined with their error. Assuredly the Lord Jesus, whom men called the Nazarene, is to us none other than “God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”

If men deny the Personality or Deity of the Holy Spirit, let us the more reverently yield to all His sacred movements within our bosoms and rejoice to adore Him as intensely as if we strove to make up for the many slights which grieve Him! We should honor God in our worship both in public and in private, intensely paying homage unto the God of Israel—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We need not perpetually repeat a form of words, but it will be well for all our private and public worship to flame with the great Truth of God which sparkles in these words—“Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.”

Let us further honor God *by acknowledging His rule*. This is more difficult, by far, to most minds. Let it be to you and to me a fixed matter that whatever God forbids, we will loathe, and whatever God commands, we will follow after. Our failures as to His will should greatly grieve us. When we are conformed to His mind, we shall give Him the glory of our sanctification, but we shall be deeply thankful that it has pleased God to make us well-pleasing in His sight! Beloved, I want you, especially, that are members of the visible Church, to take care that the rule of Christ over you is supreme. Never hesitate when the command is plain. Evident duties should never be the subjects of questioning. It is not yours to reason why—it is yours, if necessary, to dare and *die* in your loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ! He is our supreme Lord and we would not wish, even, to *breathe* apart from Him! It is rebellion against Him, even, to begin to reckon whether obedience will be profitable or not! What greater profit can you desire than to do His will? His sovereign’s pleasure is the *soldier’s* best reward. Shall we not think it joy enough to live for Him who died for us? The price of blood was paid for us by His five wounds on the tree of Calvary—are we not, henceforth, Christ’s very own? Yes, let us honor God by a definite, prompt, joyous and constant obedience as Grace shall help us.

Next to that, let me add a very important thing. Let us honor the holiness of God and the justice of God and the mercy of God *by repentance whenever we feel that we have done wrong*. You remember how Joshua bade Achan confess and so give glory to God? There is a measure of honor paid to God by the man who, being conscious of having done wrong, laments it, acknowledges the wrong and prays for pardon. The prayer of a penitent is true adoration. When I seek for mercy of God, I do thereby confess the rightness of His Law and the justice of its threatened punishment. And I also confess my belief in the goodness of the heart of God and the graciousness of His Nature and, therefore, I appeal to Him, for Jesus' sake, to put away my sin. A guilty heart cannot better honor the Lord than by a frank acknowledgment of sin and by casting itself upon the abounding mercy of the God of Grace. Do not hesitate, you guilty ones, to do this! You can make no reparation for the wrong you have done, but the very least thing and, at the same time, the very greatest thing you can do, is to say, "I have sinned and done this evil in Your sight, but O, most gracious God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Thus may the sinner give honor unto God.

But, oh, Beloved, if you have rejoiced in pardoning love, I would press upon you to honor God *by acknowledging the wisdom of His teaching*, and by a teachableness which accepts His doctrine. I am afraid that many ministers are training men to set aside faith and to live by carnal reason. This is flat treason against the Lord and His Christ! Faith, to me, means this—whatever God says in His Word I believe—and if I do not understand the fullness of its meaning, I wait for further light, knowing that it must be true if God has said it. But now men judge the Scriptures instead of being judged by the Scriptures! Their own consciousness is to be "the judge that ends the strife," and this part of Scripture is put aside, and that is lifted into undue prominence, according as human judgment questions or approves. This must not be! We live not by thinking, but by *believing*, as it is written—"The just shall live by faith." We live, not by exco-gitating fresh ideas of what God ought to be and original conceptions of what God ought to do, but by looking into the Book and believing the facts!

We honor God when we *believe Holy Scripture to be Inspired*—infallibly Inspired! And, taking it as such, say, "It is not mine to question it, or to argue against it, but simply to accept it." It is, to me, the delight of my life to admit into my very soul great master Truths of God which I am unable to understand and yet receive into myself by affection and humble reverence! I cannot comprehend the Truth of God by my understanding, but I apprehend it by my *faith*, and thus it becomes mine. To love is to understand—at least, it is so to me. Choice food of mysterious Truth is received into the mouth of my faith—it gradually dissolves within the stomach of my thought, till I take it by an assimilating and digesting faculty into my very self—and know it even as I am known! This inward sense of the Truth of God is a more real knowledge than mere reason can ever obtain.

I know the philosopher sneers. What of it? He is not worth sneering at! Brothers and Sisters, our whole nature must honor God and worship at His footstool. Is my intellect to play the monarch before God? No, but that

crown, that royalty of man—his understanding—must be cast before Jehovah's feet! The subjugation of the intellect, seems to me, to be a great part of conversion—and I question whether men are converted at all unless their reasoning powers bow down at Jehovah's feet as subjects and disciples. Oh that we might honor God by vindicating His truth against all comers, saying, "Let God be true and every man a liar"!

Further, we honor God's love by *a daily trust in Him*. You honor God, you that scarcely know where tomorrow's bread shall come from, when, having said, "Give us this day our daily bread," you *work* for it and bless His name that you have work to do! You that suffer sickness, but patiently yield yourselves up to the Divine will, believing that even your pains are for your good and that all is for the best—you are honoring God by trusting His love! Unbelief dishonors Him, but a simple childlike confidence pays homage to Him, as true and as acceptable as the song of Cherubim and Seraphim. Trust God about domestic cares, bodily pains, daily frets—and you most truly honor Him!

And, lastly, upon this point, we also honor God, dear Friends, when we *confess His goodness by patiently enduring His will and especially by rejoicing in it*. The other night our subject was, "We joy in God," and I wish we could keep it as our standing motto. It is such an honoring of God when we take great delight in Him. Pulling long faces, pining over our troubles and whining over our fears—this does *not* honor God! But in the midst of darkness and gloom, if we can still say, "The Lord is good and His mercy endures forever, therefore will I sing unto the Lord as long as I live"—this is to honor Him! If I am in prison, God shall be my liberty! If I am sick, He shall be my health! If I am poor, He shall be my riches! If I am cast down, His smile shall lift me up! I will praise Him while I have any being. This it to honor the Lord and to all who thus praise Him, the promise of our text is made, "Those who honor me I will honor."

II. Now this brings me, secondly, to notice THE INFLUENCE UPON OUR DAILY LIFE OF THIS HABIT OF HONORING GOD. A man who honors God does this practically—it is no form or farce with him, but a deep practical reality. He does it often *by consulting with God*. What shall I do? Here are two ways that may be equally right or equally wrong. I do not know which to take. The answer is, "Bring here the ephod." I like that old Scotsman's word when he was puzzled about a matter of duty and wanted to end the debate—"Give me yon Bible. That settles all." Go to your knees and cry to God in prayer—and crooked things shall be made straight! Be *willing* to be guided and you *shall* be guided. If you blunder on in your self-sufficiency, you will soon be in a slough, but if you will wait upon God, your steps shall be ordered of the Lord. We honor God by taking counsel of Him. Do this about all things and all things will go right. It is wonderful how very easily things move when the Lord directs and how wearily they drag when we trust to our own understanding.

We honor God in our daily life *when we confess Him*. It is comparatively a small matter to confess Christ before the Church, though I have known some of you rather frightened of doing that. Some are almost afraid to come and talk to me about their own salvation. If anybody is afraid of *me*, he must be a great goose, I am sure, for there is nothing in me that

should frighten anybody! I am too glad and too delighted to see anybody about his soul to be frightful to anyone. If you go to see any of the elders, you will find them more tender still. At any rate, do not be afraid of *them*. *But the real tug of war is to confess Christ before the world.* For the merchant, for instance, to stand up for that which is good and right when he is in a web of false trading and surrounded by unscrupulous dealers—this is honoring the Lord.

For the workman in the shop, when the men are making fun of every holy thing, to say, “Well, now, I believe in all that and if you want to laugh at anybody you may laugh at me, for I am on the Lord’s side”—this is honoring God! But the tendency is to sneak away and remain quite quiet. Christ seems to have nobody to speak up for Him! Is it really so? Is that dark hour being repeated, “Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled”? Everybody will speak up for the *devil*. You can hear them in the street far into the night—but as to Christ, how many are there to give Him a good word in this time of rebuke? The bulk of religious professors are cowards! Let it not be so with you! Honor God, dearly Beloved, by making a confession of Christ even though it may involve you in ridicule. Be all the more decidedly gracious because it will bring you into ill odor. Be firm for that which is right, not wishing to provoke opposition, but being quite able to bear it if it must be borne. Be men! Men are scarce creatures nowadays—men, I mean, who set their faces like a flint and are not to be moved from their integrity and their love to Christ, come what may. Honor God daily by a holy manliness.

Sometimes you can honor Christ *by some distinct service that you can do for Him*, or by some special obedience to His will. I know times where there are great temptations put in the way of men. Now, mind that you honor God at such times by an unhesitating allegiance. There is wealth, apparently, to be had for the putting out of your hand—only you could not do it with a clean conscience. Now, honor God and be bravely poor rather than be shamefully rich! “Get you behind me, Satan,” must be ready in the trial hour. You have an opportunity of making a great change in your position in life, but, at the same time, you would be deprived of opportunities of usefulness, both of giving and of getting good—then let your choice be made promptly.

I have always admired the example of the pious Jew who was told that a certain city on the Continent would excellently suit his business. “But,” he asked, “is there a synagogue there?” And when they said that there was no synagogue, he preferred to stay in another place so that he might worship God, though he would do less business. I do not know that this is often the case among Jews, any more than it is among Gentiles and, I am sorry to say that I know many Gentiles to whom God’s worship is no consideration *whatever*—they would go to the bottomless pit if they could make large profits! It does not matter where they go, or what becomes of them, so long as gain can warm the palms of their hands. They trample on the name of God and upon Christ’s Cross, as the Dutch are said to have done in Japan, in order that they may conduct their business. This spirit is from beneath! God Save us from it! Say to yourself, young man, in the very beginning of life, “I will serve God. If I can make money, very well.

But my first objective is to honor God. If I can gain a competence; if I can have sufficient to retire upon in my old age, I will be very thankful. But I am going to do right and to serve God as long as I live, come wealth or come poverty, come honor or come shame." You are the man that God will honor—I am sure of it.

Then you can honor God *with your substance* when He gives it to you. I will not say much about this, but all through Scripture it is laid down as one mark of a child of God that he holds what he has as a steward and that he uses it for the promotion of the Kingdom of God and the helping of the poor and the needy. Wherever he is, he does not seek substance merely to aggrandize himself, but with all his getting, he desires to get a liberal heart, without which the richest man is still a pauper. He longs to be useful to the cause and the Kingdom of Christ. He believes in the joy of dedicating his tithe and more unto the Lord. He has heard a voice in his ears, saying, "Honor the Lord with your substance, and with the first fruits of all your increase: so shall your barns be filled with plenty, and your presses shall burst out with new wine."

In a word, the man that really honors God seeks *to praise Him*. He wishes to make the Lord's name great throughout all the world. His main objective in living is that he may make Jesus known—that he may win more hearts to God, the blessed Father, more minds to Jesus, the Brother of humanity and more souls to the Holy Spirit, the Quickener of the Heaven-born race. Oh for a thousand hearts with which to love our Lord God, a thousand tongues with which to speak for Him, a thousand lives with which to glorify Him!

But, alas! There are many, I grieve to say, who do not seem to care about honoring God at all. And what is the influence of this upon their lives? Two or three words only upon this sorrowful business.

The influence of this upon their lives is, first, that they do not care to know anything about God and His Christ, or His Spirit, or His Gospel and His way of salvation. So, if they have a Bible, they look at it, now and then, but they never seriously read it—never sit down to *study* it—never turn to God in prayer that they may be instructed in the inner meaning of the Word. They live much the same as they would live if God were dead. It would not make any very great difference to them if there were no God and no Savior, for they so utterly forget Jehovah and His Anointed. They do not take the trouble to go across the street to hear about Him, whom they call Redeemer! If there were a lecture upon geology—if there were a great gathering upon politics and the extension of the franchise, they would be there! But as to serving God—well, they do not seem to think that there is any weight in His claims or importance in His will.

They show in their lives that they do not honor God because they attach no importance to anything that He commands or forbids, or to His grand purposes of Grace for our fallen race. Whether men are saved or lost does not matter to them! Whether Christ died or did not die is no concern of theirs! Those wonderful things which hold angels spell-bound with admiration have no attraction for these men, for whom they ought to have every attraction. Christ dies for men and yet men pass by and say, "It is

nothing to us.” These are not only the baser and more thoughtless sort—persons of intellect and culture do the same!

Hence it comes to pass that these people do not obey God. They obey the laws of their country; they respect the rules of civilized society; but as to the Laws of God, they have no care about them. God is so insignificant a factor in their life-thoughts that what Laws He may have made or may *not* have made are no concern to them at all. He may threaten them with Hell, but they defy His wrath. He may put before them the joys of Heaven, but they would not care for bliss that meant holiness and communion with God. They utterly despise God and, therefore, depend upon it, they will be despised by Him at the last!

In that day when they will be swept away as the offal of the universe—in that day when they shall be driven from His Presence and from the glory of His power, then shall they know how He has them in derision. He shall say—even He of the tender lips and of the pierced heart and tearful eyes—even *He* shall say from the Throne, “Depart you cursed,” for they have proved their cursedness by their despising God, whom they ought to have loved and sought and trusted above all things! He will despise them and banish them into shame and everlasting contempt, for they despised His mercy and poured contempt upon His justice. The contempt of God and of holy angels and of redeemed spirits must forever and ever rest on those who showed a contempt of God while here below!

Oh, take heed, dear Friends, that you do not despise God! Eli, who was God’s High Priest, fell into this sin because he thought more of displeasing his sons than he did of displeasing his God. He said to himself, “I cannot speak sharply to Hophni. He is my eldest son and a man of ripe years. He does behave very badly, but what can I do? I fear I must speak a word to him, but I will do it softly. And Phinehas—Phinehas has some fine points about him. I think he will come right by gentle means—I must not say anything sharp to him.” Now in this, he honored his sons with a false honor and did not truly honor the Lord. I sometimes tremble, myself, lest I deal too gently with some here present. And I would pray to be forgiven when, in tenderness of heart, I have not liked to speak sharply upon evil things which I know must grieve the Spirit of God in some that are the Lord’s people.

I would to God you would take more care of yourselves and watch yourselves, and not grieve the spirit of your minister by things that are not consistent with the will of God and the holiness of Christ. Do see to it, Beloved members of this Church, that you do not dishonor my Lord! Do not bring me under this great temptation to speak timidly about these things. We can easily do it, you know, and so can you, when you see sin in a Brother and do not rebuke that Brother when you ought to do so, or when those that are put by God under your care are allowed to sin with impunity. God help us to be found honoring Him, for if we do not rebuke sin, we shall be dishonoring Him—and that may spoil our life as sadly as Eli spoiled his.

In a word, Friends, if we do not honor God, we shall not make God our guiding star. We shall not make His Glory to be our chart and compass, but we shall live to get money—to get money by fair means or foul, cost

what it may. What a Gradgrind a man becomes when he forgets God and only remembers gold! Oh, the wretches there are who do not care how many poor people are starved so long as they can make a larger profit! Into their little miserable souls it never enters that it is a shame to starve the needle-woman or the worker of any kind, by putting them to a killing toil in order to earn the scantiest of food. Some make ambition their guiding star and when this is the case, they do not care what they say in the House of Commons or elsewhere, so long as they can keep themselves before the public. They make a speech today which they contradict tomorrow!

They blurt out of their mouths the first thing that comes into their heads, whether it is mischievous or beneficial. Whether it is false or true, it is no odds to them, so long as their speech will catch the ear. Only for themselves do many politicians live. And so with other men, too. The poet will sing that he may show what a poet he is, but he does not dedicate his magic of language to the God who is only to be praised. All gifts should be used for God—all art of genius, science of mind and skill of hand. These talents come from Him and to Him should they be devoted. But alas, in most cases they are used for meaner ends!

There are men whose guiding star is licentiousness—they live to please themselves and to gratify the flesh. Wretched, dung-hill breed as they are, they will go back to the oblivion where they came, after having, I fear, polluted many who otherwise might have escaped from these corruptions. God save men of this corrupt kind, while yet forgiveness can be found! And may we all come to this resolve—that we will honor God.

III. Now mark—and this is the last point—THE REWARD OF ALL THIS. “Those who honor Me I will honor.”

Is not this a grand reward? It is not, “They that honor Me shall be honored,” but, “Those who honor Me I will honor.” *Does God honor men?* He promises to do so! Compared with the honor which the Lord is able to give, there is no honor which is worth naming in the same day. When God honors a man, the glory is glory, indeed. One of the French kings gave to a conquering general some £600 a year, or thereabouts, for a wonderful deed of prowess, but the soldier told the king that he would have preferred the gold cross. I do not think I should have had such preference for a bauble, but honor is a precious commodity. To get honor from God is very different from getting it from a king. It was said of Alexander that of two nobles who had served him well, he gave to one 10,000 talents and to the other a kiss—and he that had the money envied him who received the kiss! One kiss from the mouth of *God* would outweigh kingdoms! Honor from God—favor from God—this is a high reward which cannot be weighed against 10,000 *worlds* and all the glory thereof. “Those who honor Me I will honor.”

Suppose that a man is a preacher and *in his preaching* he seeks to glorify God only, and sets forth the finished work of Jesus and cries, earnestly, “Behold the Lamb of God,” God will honor him. He shall not labor in vain, or spend his strength for nothing. Suppose another man is living *in the midst of his family*, praying for the conversion of his children, setting them a holy example, chiding them for their faults and encouraging them

in all good things? Shall he be without a blessing? No! "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Some of us know the blessing of honoring God in our families. Where there is family prayer, where God is set before the young as the chief end of their being, God will surely honor such parents by giving them a believing household.

The man who honors God shall be honored *in his own heart* by peace of conscience—honored in his own spirit by the conviction that it must be wisdom to be right and true and honest—and that it can never be, under any circumstances, right to do wrong, or wise to break a Divine command. The highest policy a man can pursue, if he must pursue policy at all, is never to deviate from the strict path of right. A straight line is the shortest distance between any two places and the shortest way to true happiness and prosperity is to do right though the heavens should fall.

Such a man honoring his God among his brethren shall be honored by God *in the Church*. If he has glorified God in the Church by his earnestness and zeal and holy living, his brethren shall mark him and esteem him. His godliness shall give him weight and influence. And though he may always prefer to take the lowest place, yet shall he be had in honor of them that sit at meals with him.

And *in the world* it shall be the same. I do not believe that a man truly serves God without, in the long run, winning the esteem of his fellow citizens. They burned such men of old, but when they burned them, they still honored them, for all over this nation, when Popery was in its prime and saints were persecuted, the country people sat at their firesides and they talked of holy Master Taylor, or godly old Latimer who had suffered for Christ's sake! Though they hardly dared speak, for fear some spy would hear, yet they said what a shame it was and they muttered to one another what a detestable religion that must be which killed the saints of God! This kind of feeling went through all the tradesmen of London and even affected the apprentices and serving-men.

In country towns and villages everybody said, "What a horrible system this must be which burns our pastors for preaching the Gospel!" Then, all of a sudden, they shouted, "Down with it!" The fire, long smothered, at last broke out and again they said of Popery, "Down with it!" Away went crucifix and pyx and priest—the mass and the mass-makers all went packing, as they had a right to do, for they never brought good to England or to any other land which harbored them! Indignation burned quietly in the land and though, for years, it scarcely appeared, at last it found vent—and that thing was done for which it were worth while for all of us to die and 10,000 more—Popery went down and the Gospel went up! The Gospel of Christ was proclaimed and the Bible was unchained that every man might read it! Brothers and Sisters, you will be honored in your turn as those men are honored today if, when the worst comes to the worst, you are found faithful as they were!

Therefore stand to your guns! Stand to your guns if you die there, for the Lord is coming! I see the banner, I mark the white horse, I hear the Captain's voice. The trumpet rings out, "Behold, He comes!" Honored shall

that man be who stands with loins girt in his place in the battle, in the day when the Captain is saluted as Conqueror all along the line!

What will become of the sneaking coward in the day of Christ's appearing? Where will the fearful stand, who did not dare to wear the name of Christ for fear of being laughed at? Where will the false-hearted be when the Lord Jesus flames forth in His majesty? Then shall they ask the rocks to cover them and the mountains to fall upon them to hide them from His face! Dastards that they were, they shall not know where to fly.

Oh come, let us seek our Savior's face, tonight, by humble prayer and holy faith! Let us bow before the redeeming Lord and yield ourselves to Him—and then, from this day forward, let this be our one objective—to crown Him with many crowns who left His crown for us and to honor God who, in infinite mercy, has delivered us from going down into the Pit! How I wish I might stir some young heart to give itself up to Christ tonight! How I wish I might win some old heart for my Lord! Oh, shipmate, you have had that black pirate flag flying at the masthead long enough. Down with it, now, and sail under the blood-red Cross for Christ and for God, tonight! Let all the old cargo be turned out and the new be taken in. May the Lord make a clean sweep of everything that is displeasing to Him and then come on board and take the helm and steer you till He brings you to the port of Everlasting Peace!

"Who is on the Lord's side?" Who, that has not been on His side, will enlist tonight? How is the enlisting to be managed? It is to be done as all enlisting is done. In our army, they enlist a man by making him take a shilling. You are not enlisted by giving anything, but by *receiving* the King's money. Take Christ by faith. Receive Him! Stretch out your hands. He shall be the earnest-money to you of the great reward that God will give His saints in the day of His Glory when He shall honor them and make them to "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." God bless you and may we meet at the right hand of the Throne of God in the coming of the Lord. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

1 Samuel 2:13-17, 27-36; 4:10-18.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—

95, 31 (VER. I), 135 (VER. II).

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

HONOR FOR HONOR

NO. 2906

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1876.

“Those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.”
1 Samuel 2:30.

GOD is certain, sooner or later, to recompense men according to the rule of Infallible Justice and if it is so among saints, it is equally so among sinners. If we could really know the secret history of any man's life, we would be able to understand his career better than we now do. There is many a life of which we have had to say to the Lord, “Your way is in the sea, and Your path in the great waters, and your footsteps are not known.” Yet if we had known more about the man, it would have been all plain enough. If we had seen the sin that was hidden from human eyes, we would have understood the sorrow that was evident to all.

That will suffice with regard to the general principle that is enunciated in our text. If we honor God, He will honor us. And if we despise Him, we shall be lightly esteemed. Now, taking only the first clause of the text, there are two things upon which I wish to speak with great earnestness. The first is, *here is a plain duty*, namely, to honor God and, secondly, *here is a very generous reward*—“Those who honor Me I will honor.”

I. First, then, HERE IS A PLAIN DUTY—to honor God.

It is the natural duty of every creature to honor its Creator and with such a glorious and blessed God as Jehovah is, it certainly must be incumbent upon all who have any understanding of His existence, to render honor and homage to Him. Such is His personal grandeur, such is the perfection of His Character, such is His almighty power and such are the obligations under which we are placed to Him as our Creator, that altogether apart from spiritual things, it is, undoubtedly, the duty of every creature to honor God!

But what shall I say, Beloved, of those of us who are the Lord's chosen people? Do I need to prove that we should honor our God? He is our Father and He said long ago, “If then, I am a Father, where is My honor?” Ordinary children are told to honor their father and mother—then how much more should the children of God honor their Father who is in Heaven? He has done so much for us above and beyond our creation—in our election, in our effectual calling, in our regeneration, in the blood-washing, in the daily supply of our needs, in the continual preservation

of our souls from going down into the Pit—that we are overwhelmed with indebtedness to Him—and the very least return that we can make to Him is to render Him all the honor that we can. He has made Himself known to us in a way that He has not revealed Himself to the rest of His creatures. His handiwork is seen in the whole visible Creation. In every star His glory shines. But He is not seen there as He is revealed to us in Christ Jesus and, alas, unrenewed men have not eyes with which they can see the resplendent Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But He has given to us this spiritual eyesight! He has taught us much about Himself by His Spirit and the Spirit has revealed to us even the deep things of God. If it were possible for us to *not* honor Him after all that we know of Him, what criminality would be ours! But the knowledge and the Grace He has given us compel us to honor Him and the more we know of what He is, and of what He has done for us, the more do we feel that we must and will honor Him. Glory be unto Your holy name, O gracious Father, that in our inmost spirits we adore, honor and worship You at this moment! And, by Your Grace we will do so till time shall be no more!

I hope you see clearly that it is your duty to honor God, so let us enquire in what way that duty comes home to each one of us. First, I think that we are to honor God *by confessing His Deity in all our prayers, praises and, indeed, at all times*. May none of us ever fall into the various heresies which some have held concerning the Persons of the blessed Trinity in Unity! Of all errors, these most closely touch the very vitals of true religion. I suppose if any man looks long into the Doctrine of the Trinity, he will be like one who gazes upon the sun and will be apt, first, to be dazzled and then to be blinded by the excessive light. If a man asks that he may understand this great mystery and refuses to believe until he does, then he will most assuredly be blinded! How can you, O man, hold the sea in the hollow of your hand? And how can you see God's face and yet live? Do you marvel that your mind staggers under the load that you try to put upon it and that your reason begins to reel? We cannot comprehend God! But we can honor the Father by worshipping Him and honor the Son by adoring Him—and honor the Holy Spirit by paying homage, reverence and glory unto Him—and never countenancing in our spirit any error which would detract from the Glory of Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, for, if we do, we shall not obtain the blessing promised in our text—“Those who honor Me I will honor.”

God save us from believing any doctrines which cast reflections upon our Lord Jesus Christ, or upon the Divine Spirit! I am afraid that the Church of Christ has never yet sufficiently honored the Spirit of God and that, in the ministry of the present day, there is such a general ignoring of the Holy Spirit and His work that many hearers might say, as those disciples at Ephesus did, “We have not so much as heard whether there is any Holy Spirit.” If that is the case, it ought to be repented of and avoided in the future—for you may depend upon it that honoring the Triune God is absolutely essential to obtaining the blessing promised in our text, “Those who honor Me I will honor.”

Secondly, we can do this *by confessing the dominion of God* and proving the reality of our confession by yielding obedience to Him. It is no use for you to say, "I honor God," and yet to continue to live contrary to His Law. If we do honor Him, we shall seek to obey His commandments and though, by reason of infirmity, we shall fall short of the perfection of obedience, we shall honor the Lord by weeping over our imperfections. We shall not quarrel with the requirements of God's commands, but we shall ask the Holy Spirit to help us to be conformed to them. That man does not honor God who goes picking and choosing among the Divine Precepts, attending to one, but not to another! He is not honoring God who does not render obedience to His will in all things—the social duties that appertain to the hearth and home, the duties that are associated with the Church of God and the duties which concern the common life of ourselves and others. It is never right to offer to God a sacrifice stained with the blood of a duty—and it is by endeavoring to be obedient to the Lord in all respects that our desire to honor Him is to be proved. If there is anything about the Lord's will that you do not like, my dear Brothers and Sisters, that is a point in which you are wrong! It is an indication of the true state of your soul when there is any Divine Precept against which you kick—and you should pray very fervently that you may overcome that sin and be conformed to the Lord's will in all things—for, unless you honor Him by seeking to render universal obedience to Him—unless, being saved by His Grace, you abhor all sin and seek, by the help of the Holy Spirit to walk blameless in all the commandments of the Lord, you have not given Him the honor which He rightly claims and you cannot expect that He should honor you!

In the next place, seeing that we have all sinned, we must honor God *by confessing sin and so glorifying His Justice*. I believe that God is greatly glorified by a man who is overwhelmed with a sense of his guilt, when he comes and bares his bosom to the Divine inspection, acknowledging all his offenses, grieving over them and, as it were, laying his head upon the block and saying, "Lord, if You execute me. If You let the axe of Your Justice fall upon me to my utter destruction, I dare not complain for I deserve it all." Therefore, dear Friends, submit yourselves to the sentence of God—acknowledge how just it would be if He were to execute it upon you, for so you shall find favor at His hands. I do not know what else a poor convicted sinner can do that can be more acceptable to God, with the one exception of his coming to fully believe in Christ. So, guilty one, glorify God by making confession of your guilt. You have broken His Holy Law—acknowledge your offense in having broken it. Pay respect to the commands of God by confessing that you ought to have kept them. Admit the heinousness of the sin by which you have violated the will of God, for, in so doing, you will be honoring the Lord!

And you, dear child of God, conscious of so many imperfections, remember that you honor God when you lie very low before Him—when you loathe yourself—when, as in the very dust, you cry, "Lord remember Your poor unworthy child and have pity on me!" You are thus magnifying and glorifying the holiness of God to which you feel that you have not yet

attained. If you admit that you are but dust and ashes in His sight and not worthy to be regarded with favor by Him, that humility of yours is honoring and glorifying to Him.

Further, we can honor the Lord *by submitting to His teaching*. A great many people go to the Bible to find texts in it to endorse a system of divinity which they have already embraced. That is not honoring God. The right course is to get your system of divinity out of the Bible under the unerring teaching of the Holy Spirit. This is the Book that is to teach us—we are not to try to square it to our scheme, but we are to make our scheme—if we have one—embrace all that is here revealed so far as we can ascertain it. Young man, I can speak from experience when I say that nothing will give you greater peace of mind than taking the Word of God as your only guide from the very beginning of your Christian life. It is commonly said that “the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants,” but I scarcely know of any sect of Protestants, with one exception, of which that is true. There is something that all the others believe which cannot be found in the Bible and they have some other book or tradition tacked on at the end of the Bible. Sit down, my Friend, and study the Book without note or comment, asking the Holy Spirit to teach you what it means—and whatever it means, you believe it! You will not discover all that it means—there will be mistakes in you, as in your fellow Christians, but follow the Truth of God, as far as you can see it, wherever it may lead you, even if following it shall cause you to stand quite alone, for, in so doing, you will be honoring it and it will honor you.

It is such a sweet thing to be able to say, “I may have been mistaken, but I have honestly sought to know the mind of God and with earnest dependence upon the Holy Spirit I have desired to accept His teaching. And, as far as I have learned it, I have followed it, regardless of the consequences of doing so, knowing that it must always be safe to follow where the Spirit leads the way.” Act thus, young men and young women, whatever others may do! Some of them are content to follow the erroneous customs of former generations, although they are clearly contrary to the Word of God. Do not follow their evil example, but while the wax is soft, let it take the Divine impression of the Truth of God and so may you grow up to honor God beyond all who have gone before you!

There is another way of honoring God and that is *by simply trusting Him at all times*. Always remember that the greater our troubles, the greater our weakness, the greater our infirmities—the greater is our opportunity of glorifying God by the aid of His Holy Spirit. “They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep.” They see much that landsmen never see and those who have deep experience of trial and trouble are the people who see most of the wonders of the Lord in the spiritual realm. Dear Brother, all seemed to go well with you until you trusted God—but since you did so, everything has seemed to go wrong with you! Can you trust Him now? Faith, when we are in smooth water, honors God, but faith, when we are in rough waters, will glorify Him far more! It is easy to bless His name when the barn is full and the table

loaded—but can you glorify Him now that the homestead has burned down and the cupboard is bare? Ah, good woman—you could glorify God when your husband was in vigorous health and your children were all round about you—but now that He has been taken from you and your children are following him, consumption seizing upon them one after the other—can you trust the Lord now? And you, my Brother, now that your leg is broken, or your lungs begin to fail, or the asthma comes upon you, or old age is coming to cripple you—now that your circumstances are changing and your friends, like the swallows in autumn, begin to forsake you—can you rejoice in the Lord and glory in the God of Your salvation now? If you can do so, it is now in your power to honor God in a very wondrous way. It is glorious to be able to say, with Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” Whatever happens to you, never doubt the wisdom of God’s working, or the love of His heart, but still, “rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him.” If you do this, you will honor Him and He will, in due time, honor you!

I might remind you of many other ways in which we may honor and glorify God, but I will only mention one more. And that is this—*when we have not any particular trouble, we ought to honor God by great joy*. I do not mean by such joy as the worldling has in his corn and wine, but by *holy joy*. How few Christians speak of God as their exceeding joy! I think we do meet with cheerful Christians, nowadays, more frequently than we used to, for we were, at one time, taught that the longer a man’s face, the greater was His Grace. We do not believe in any such notion as that! Yet, to my mind we seldom, if ever, attain to the standard of joy which ought to be the abiding portion of a child of God. The elect ought to be the happiest people beneath the sky! Look at a great furnace when there is a strong blast blowing upon it—what intense heat there is there! A Christian ought to be like that furnace, glowing with intense delight, fervent love and overflowing joy! Why should you not rejoice, Beloved? Your sins are forgiven you! You are an heir of Heaven. You are, it may be, within a month or two, or within a year or two of being at God’s right hand—to go no more out forever! Why should you not rejoice? Even now His Spirit dwells within you, His heart burns with love towards you and He rejoices over you—why should you not rejoice? If you rejoiced more, you would honor the Lord more and He would honor you even as He has promised! The poorest saint here can share in this great blessing simply by honoring God. The man with the least talent can honor God! The most ignorant Christian, the one who is least instructed in worldly learning can honor God! The weakest in bodily health, the sick, the dying can all honor God if they are His people! This plain duty is one which is possible to all the saints, by the Holy Spirit’s gracious aid. May He help each one of us to carry it out and truly to honor God!

II. Now I turn to the second point—HERE IS A VERY GRACIOUS REWARD—“Those who honor Me I will honor.”

First, *this is true in the Church of God*. The sons of Eli—Hophni and Phinehas—were priests, but they did not honor God and, therefore, God did not honor them. The people despised them and loathed the very ser-

vices of the sanctuary because of their sin—and God thrust them out of the priest’s office. I believe, my Brothers—and there are many of us who either are already ministers of the Gospel, or are in course of training for that high office—I believe that unless we with all our hearts honor God in our ministry, He will never honor us. My dear Brother, if you ever go in for anything else but glorifying God, you will make a failure of it! If you start with the idea of being a fine preacher, one who is able to orate in rounded periods and flowery sentences, or if it is your great ambition to gain a good position among respectable people, you will certainly come down with a crash and great will be your fall! But if any young man, truly called of God, says to himself, “I will glorify God whether I live or die—whether I am poor or whether I am prosperous—whether I am the means of bringing many souls to Christ, or am, apparently, a failure in my ministry, I will, at least preach the Truth of God and I will pray over it, and I will agonize in prayer for the souls of men. My teaching shall not aim at glorifying philosophical opinions, or displaying my own culture and my own powers of thought, but I will, above everything else, honor God. I will honor the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I will preach nothing up but Christ and nothing down but sin. I shall not seek to honor the denomination to which I belong, but I will live and labor simply to honor God”—well, my Brother, if that is your resolve, then the Lord will honor you!

Then, next, *this promise is true with regard to our own households.* Poor Eli, I have no doubt, wished to have honor in his own house, so he paid great deference to his wicked sons. He knew that they were doing very, very wrong, but he spoke very gently to them, just as some Christian people whom I know are doing in their own families. Their boys are living as badly as ever they can, but they only say, “Our sons are so high-spirited and so easily offended that we must only indirectly hint that they are doing wrong. It would never do for us to pull them up sharply and say to them right straight out, ‘You are going headlong to Hell and we implore you to stop, for, if you continue to act as you are now doing, you will be ruined forever.’” Yes, and in many a house God is not honored by family prayer—and the boys and girls are taught to look after money as if that were the chief end of life! “You go in for business, John, and make money somehow and do not be too particular about the means you employ in getting it. And, Mary, that is a very nice young man, an excellent Christian man, too, who is coming to see you—but he will not do for a husband—he has not enough money and that is the main thing to be considered nowadays.” The worship of Mammon, the golden calf, prevails almost everywhere. God commanded His ancient people not to offer their children to Moloch, but it is done very often today—many parents are offering their sons and daughters to Moloch—the Moloch of fashion, the Moloch of wealth—daughters are given to men without characters as long as they have a sufficient quantity of gold.

Well now, if the father or mother, instead of falling into that sin, says, “My chief concern for my dear boys and girls is that they should know the Lord. I should be glad to see them succeeding in business, or happily

married to those who are in a good position, but my great longing is that they may know Christ and be found in Him, for that is the main thing, after all, and I will not tolerate in my house anything that Christ would not look upon with approbation, neither will I permit, as far as my power can go, anything that would grieve the Spirit of God." I believe that wherever parents thus seek the honor of God, God will honor their families very wonderfully. You will find, almost everywhere, that when a man gives everything up for God and does not look so much for the advancement of his own family as for the good of God's family as a whole, the Lord says to him very much what Queen Elizabeth said to one of the London merchants of her day. "I want you to go to Hamburg to attend to some business of mine," said the queen. "But Your Majesty," said the merchant, "my own business will suffer in my absence." "No," said the queen, "it will not, for if you attend to my business, I will attend to yours." And the Lord says to us that if we honor Him, He will honor us. And even in this present life He will give us a hundred fold for anything we give up for Him—and in the world to come? LIFE EVERLASTING!

May none of you, dear Friends, ever be like Eli who had to mourn over the destruction of his sinful sons. But may you honor God in your families, for then He will also honor you there. Who is so honored as the venerable Christian who has his sons and his grandsons around him? He is a king, every inch of him, though, perhaps, he never earned more than a day-laborer's wages. As he lays his hands upon the heads of his children's children and implores his God to be their God, also, I seem to see a Patriarch stand before me in a grandeur which an emperor might envy! God will honor you in your family if you honor Him there.

Then, again, God has a way of honoring His people *in the society around them*. You, young man, going into that warehouse and taking a clerkship with many others—if you are consistent, true to your colors and serve God faithfully—they will ridicule you, very likely, for a while. But if you continue to be consistent, they will soon respect you. If you honor God, God will honor you and you will find that, in society, it is the wise and safe method to keep the Lord always before you! Some of you young men who have come up to London from the country are apt to think that as others do not go to a place of worship on the Sabbath, you will not do as you did at your home. But I pray you to keep up your good country custom, for your employers and those who are about you will think far better of you if you do so. And, although this is, by itself, a low and ignoble motive, yet it has its place among the higher reasons for attending the means of Grace. If you honor God, you will get honor in the eyes of those whose opinion is worthy of your regard.

Again, if we honor God, He will honor us *in the wide, wide world*, so far as our influence may reach. Look at that great crowd gathered in Smithfield! Who is that poor wretch standing in the middle? Many of those around him look upon him with the utmost scorn and derision. They have chained him up to a stake, and they are bringing dry firewood, for they are going to burn him to death! Who is that man? People in the crowd cry out that he is a dreadful heretic who deserves to die! But if you

turn to Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, you will find his name recorded there among the noble army who died as heroes of the Cross. Because he suffered for Christ, God has honored him and, at this present day, who among us would not rather be the martyr who was burned than the cardinal who was the means of getting him burned? Who would not rather have been numbered among the faithful multitudes in the valleys of Piedmont whose names are all unknown, than have been the Duke of Savoy, or the King of France, or the Pope of Rome who conspired together to put them to death?

And, dear Friends, if God did not honor us before men at all, it would not matter much, *for those who honor Him, He honors in their own consciences*. God can honor you in such a way that you will be more contented with that honor than if your name and fame were blazoned forth before the whole world even though nobody else sees that He does it! The orator who addressed an audience and found that all his hearers went away with the exception of one man, was quite content with his one auditor, for that man was Plato! And if, in this world, you should so act that you should have no approbation left except the approval of God manifested to your own conscience, you might well be content! "I, Athanasius, against the world," was a grand thing for that staunch hero of the faith to be able to say, but if God was with Athanasius, he might just as well have said, "I, Athanasius, against fifty thousand worlds," for what is the whole universe in comparison with God? "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Honor God, my dear young Friend leaving the parental roof and coming to London. I pray you to honor God and even if you should not meet with the esteem which a good character ought to win for you from those by whom you are surrounded—if you should come under a cloud—if you should, after all, have to live a life of poverty and obscurity—yet the fact that you have done what is right and that God smiles upon you with approval and gives you peace of conscience and quiet confidence in your soul will be a sufficient reward for you!

I close by reminding you that *we never know, any of us, how much God is honoring us*. You did a noble deed the other day, my Brother, yet no one said, "Thank you," for it. You gave all you had, poor widow—the two mites that were all your living and nobody knew anything about it. But do you suppose that there is no fame except that which is spoken of by the breath of *man*? There are blessed spirits hovering all around us—multitudes of holy angels are watching the saints—and they see and approve all that is right! And I doubt not that there is often a worthy affirmation uttered by angelic lips when they see the devotion of the saints of God—the devotion which is unseen by mortal eyes!

And, last of all, there shall come a day when this earth shall be all ablaze and, amidst the terrors of that great consummation of the age, the dead shall rise and you shall be among them, Brothers and Sisters. Then shall the trumpet sound exceedingly loud and long—and all human beings and the fallen spirits, too, shall come to judgment! And there, amidst such a throng as never was before beheld, the despised, misrepresented, persecuted follower of the right who honored God at all costs

shall receive, before the assembled universe, honor from the Lord of All! Lift up your heads, O you children of God, for your Redemption draws near! It is a grand day, with some men, when they receive the Victoria Cross from their sovereign's hand, or when they are elevated to the House of Lords. But it will be a far higher honor when Christ shall say to the righteous, "Come, you blessed of My Father; inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," and when He shall say to each one who has faithfully served Him, "Well done, good and faithful servant, you have been faithful in a few things, I will make you ruler over many things; enter you into the joy of your Lord." Brothers and Sisters, if God has saved us, let us live as in the light of the coming Day of Judgment! And may the Lord have mercy upon us in that day and honor us because first, by His Grace, *He enabled us to honor Him!*

As for you who never think of honoring God and never care about Him, your destruction is certain if you continue in the way in which you are now walking. If you want to know how you may be damned, it is only a little matter of neglect that will ensure it. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" I fear that many of you are living in that neglect. May the Holy Spirit graciously turn you from it and cause you to seek the Lord and believe in Jesus this very moment—that you, too, honoring God by your confession of sin and by believing in His Son, Jesus Christ, whom He has set forth as the one Propitiation for sin, may find the promise of our text true to you, also—for He will honor you even as you have honored Him!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 SAMUEL 2.**

Verses 1-3. *And Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoices in the LORD, my horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over my enemies because I rejoice in Your salvation. There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside You: neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceedingly proud; let not arrogance come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed.* This is a very suggestive and forcible expression. God does not judge our actions by their appearance, but puts them into the scales of the sanctuary and weighs them as carefully as bankers weigh gold!

4-8. *The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren has born seven and she that has many children is waxed feeble. The LORD kills, and makes alive: he brings down to the grave, and brings up. The LORD makes poor, and makes rich: He brings low, and lifts up. He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and He has set the world upon them.* What a clear view Hannah had of the Sovereignty of God and how plainly she perceived that God overrules all mortal things and does as He wills! How

she seemed to glory in the power of that almighty hand whose working unbelievers cannot discern, but which, to this gracious woman's opened eyes, was so conspicuous everywhere!

9-12. *He will keep the feet of His saints and the wicked shall be silent in darkness, for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of Heaven shall He thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and He shall give strength unto His king and exalt the horn of His anointed. And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest. Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they knew not the LORD.* Yet they were priests and when a man stands up to minister in holy things, and by virtue of his office is supposed to know the Lord, yet really does not, he stands not only in a position of the utmost guilt, but also in a position in which he is never likely to get a blessing. He seems to be beyond the reach of the ordinary agencies of mercy because he has assumed a position to which he has no right.

13, 14. *And the priest's custom with the people was that when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was boiling, with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the flesh-hook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came there.* There was no such rule or regulation given by God, but these sons of Eli had made rules for themselves. It is always wrong to alter the regulations of the Lord's House. Even the least of them should be obeyed exactly as it stands.

15, 16. *Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have boiled flesh of you, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as your soul desires, then he would answer him, No, but you shall give it to me now: and if not, I will take it by force.* There were sacrifices in which God had His portion in the burning of the fat upon the altar—and the priest had a portion allotted to him. And the offerer himself had a portion upon which he fed, in token of his communion and fellowship with God. The priest ought to have been content with what was an ample portion for him, but the greed of these young men prostituted holy things and defiled the House of the Lord.

17. *Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.* They not only grieved God, but they also grieved His people so much that they ceased to come where their consciences were wounded and where their most tender sensibilities were perpetually shocked.

18. *But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.* What a contrast there was between little Samuel and the sons of Eli! He was not led astray by the evil example of those who were older than he and to whom he would naturally look up because of their high office. This dear child escaped contamination because God's Grace

preserved him and also because his mother's prayers, like a wall of fire, were round about him.

19-21. *Moreover his mother made him a little coat and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, the LORD give you seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home. And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD.* She lent one child to the Lord and she had five others given to her! God always pays good interest on all His loans. "He that has pity upon the poor lends unto the Lord." It would be well if more would see how much interest they could get from such a loan as that!

22-25. *Now Eli was very old, and heard what his sons did unto all Israel and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And he said unto them, Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil doings by all the people. No my sons; for it is not a good report that I hear: you make the LORD'S people to transgress. If one man sins against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall entreat for him?* That is the way Eli rebuked his sons. "And very gently he did it, dear old man," says someone. Yes, but don't you imitate him! If you do, you may also inherit the curse that came upon his house! There are other virtues in this world besides gentleness. There is sometimes needed the power to speak sternly—to rebuke with firmness and severity—and Eli had not this. He was an easy-going old soul. Ah, but when the honor of God is at stake, such action as his is out of place! It is all very well to have everybody saying, "Mr. So-and-So is such an amiable man! There is no sectarianism and no bigotry about him. He never says a word to offend anybody." Just so, but Martin Luther was not at all that kind of man and where would we have been without such protests as his?

25. *Notwithstanding, they listened not unto the voice of their father because the LORD would slay them.* They had gone so far in their sin that the Lord permitted them to go still further—and to bring punishment upon themselves for their evil deeds.

26. *And the child Samuel grew on and was in favor both with the LORD, and also with men.* How vividly the Holy Spirit brings out the contrast between Samuel and these two wicked young men! They grew on in sin, but the child Samuel grew on in favor, both with God and with men. The Lord loves to watch His lilies growing among the sharp thorns and to see how brightly His stars are shining in the blackest night.

27, 28. *And there came a man of God unto Eli and said unto him, Thus says the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of your father when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? And did I choose him? That is, Aaron—*

28-30. *Out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before Me? And did I give unto the house of your father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering, which I have com-*

manded in my habitation, and honor your sons above Me, to make yourselves fat with the chief of all the offerings of Israel My people? Therefore the Lord God of Israel says, I said indeed that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever. There was a condition attached to that promise—a condition implied, if not expressly stated.

30, 31. *But now the Lord says, Be it far from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come that I will cut off your arm.* That is, “the strength of your family shall be taken away”—

31-33. *And the arm of your father’s house, that there shall not be an old man in your house. And you shall see an enemy in My habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in your house forever. And the man of yours whom I shall not cut off from My altar, shall be to consume your eyes, and to grieve your heart: and all the increase of your house shall die in the flower of their age.* God does not think little of sin in His ministers and in His sanctuary! There is a difference between sin and sin. The place where it is committed may make a difference and the office of the man who commits it may make a difference. Sin makes its culmination when the sinner is highly favored and brought into close relationship with God by office.

34, 35. *And this shall be sign unto you, that shall come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die, both of them. And I will raise Me up a faithful priest that shall do according to that which is in My heart and in My mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before My anointed forever.* No doubt first referring to Zadok who succeeded afterwards to the priest’s office, but looking still further forward to our Lord Jesus Christ who is the ever-faithful High Priest who always does according to that which is in the mind and heart of the Father!

36. *And it shall come to pass that everyone that is left in your house shall come and bow down to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray you, into one of the priests’ offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.* Or, rather, as the margin has it, “Put me, I pray you, into somewhat about the priesthood.” “Put me into something that has to do with the priesthood.” So the house of Eli passed from its honorable elevation into degradation and poverty. However highly favored any of us may have been, let us never presume upon that and turn aside to sin. If we do not know the Lord and do not honor Him in all the acts that we perform in His name, it may be a degradation like that of Eli’s house may come upon us because we have despised the will and the words of the Most High.

—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.**

FROM DEATH TO LIFE

NO. 523

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 26, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*The Lord kills and makes alive: He brings down
to the grave, and brings up.”*
1 Samuel 2:6.

THIS sentence occurs in the very remarkable song of Hannah, who was equally illustrious as a poetess and prevalent as a suppliant. She sings an experimental song, for her deep sorrow had been a living death to her, and her joyful exaltation was a triumphant resurrection. Her hymn is a golden bracelet set with the jewels of sparkling contrasts. And this verse, with its vivid opposition between life and death, restoration and the grave, bears in it diamonds of the finest quality. Like the ewes in the Canticles, this verse bears twins.

There is the double blessing of Othniel's wife in this text—it has both the upper and the nether springs as its inheritance. It has its own plain and *natural meaning*, which lies upon its surface like dust of gold. It has, moreover a *spiritual meaning*, which needs to be dug for like silver in the mine.

I. In reference to ITS FIRST AND MOST MANIFEST MEANING, “The Lord brings down to the grave and brings up.” Here the agency of God, in life and death, is clearly revealed to us. How well it is to discern the Lord's hand in everything. Our Puritan forefathers were custom to speak of God as restraining the bottles of Heaven, or sending a gracious rain. As sending forth the wind, or hiding it in His storehouse. But we have grown so wise that we begin to understand how the rain is formed, and we talk about the winds as if we had been into the chambers from which they come howling forth and had discovered all the secrets of the universe.

We ascribe events to second causes, to the laws of nature, and I know not what. I think it were far better if we would go back to the good old way of talking and speaking of the Lord as being in everything. While we do not deny the laws of nature, nor decry the discoveries of science, we will suffer none of these to be hung up as a veil before our present God. O foolish wisdom, which widens the distance between me and my heavenly Father! O sweet simplicity of love, which sees the God of love in every place, at every hour! I need no telescope to see my God—behold, O sons of men, He is here—and my heart joyfully perceives Him.

God is in life and death, in sickness and in health. This, surely, will soften the pains of sickness and gild the joys of recovery. If you look upon sickness and restoration as merely the products of natural causes you will not feel humbled when you are stretched upon the bed, nor grateful when you walk out again, and breathe the fresh air. But if you see God's finger in touching your bones and your flesh, you will be humbled under the chastisement. And if you discern His hand in restoring your youth, like

the eagle's, you will be able, like David, to say, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all His benefits."

Let others forget God if they will, that is the attribute of the wicked. But let His saints remember Him and let them speak well of His name and have it in their mouths all the day long—

***"It is God who lifts our comforts high,
Or sinks them in the grave."***

This most precious fact should produce several gracious results in our hearts.

First of all, *it should awaken gratitude*. What a mercy it is that we are here this evening! You would think it more a mercy, perhaps, if certain of yonder seats had been left unoccupied because those who sat there but a few days ago have gone the way of all flesh. If those pews could tell you where their former owners now are, you would praise the preserving hand of God far more heartily. Why, I looked just now with solemn gaze upon a spot where was custom to sit one who has heard me preach for years, but God has lately called him to His bar.

And I turn my head and look upon another spot—just there—where used to sit another friend, but this last week, while journeying in Wales for his health, he ran down a slope on one of the beautiful mountains a little more rapidly than he should have done. The fence at the bottom gave way and he was precipitated into an eternal world. Even in our recreations, what dangers dog our heels!

You sometimes smile at old-fashioned people who thank God for "journeying mercies," and "journeying protections," but, indeed, such petitions are as fitting as ever they were. I always like to offer to my God thanksgivings for mercies known and mercies *unknown*. Christ had unknown sufferings and we enjoy, as the result, unknown mercies. When we know that—

***"Dangers stand thick through all the ground,
To push us to the tomb,
And fierce diseases wait around,
To hurry mortals home,"***

our preservation from these dangers should make us bless our God, "who redeems our life from destruction." Glory be to that solitary arm which shields us from a vast array of foes!

While it causes gratitude, dear Friends, it should *compel consideration* and lead us to pray that sickness and health may be sanctified to us. "The Lord brings down to the grave," and it is His rule never to do anything without a purpose. "He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men for nothing." There is always a "needs be," if "we are in heaviness through manifold temptations." Is it not the part of wisdom to say, with Job, "Show me why you contend with me?" Should not the sick chamber be a place where we should seek God?

Indeed, where is there a place in which we should not seek Him? Brethren, we ought to ask the sanctified use of everything. Are we not to ask a blessing at the table upon our every meal? What is there, then, upon which we do not need the blessing of God? But especially do we need it upon our trials. Ask a blessing, my Brothers and Sisters, upon your troubles. Say grace over a table which is not so well loaded as it used to be.

Say grace over broken bones and aching heads, over pains and pangs and partings, for there you want Divine Grace more than anywhere else, with the exception, it is true, of your prosperity—and there, likely enough, you need a double portion of His Spirit.

If we have been lifted up from the couch of languishing and suffering, then let us quietly expect the comfortable fruits of righteousness which are afterwards to be brought forth in those who are exercised with trials. Let us pray God that the pruning may make us bring forth more fruit. That the filing may make us shine the more brightly. That the furnace may consume our dross, and the deep rivers drown our follies. If the rod shall scourge our sloth to death, and the staff shall strengthen our faith, both rod and staff shall be seen to be in the Lord's hands and shall therefore comfort us.

I think you will all agree with me, too, that the Lord's bringing us low and raising us up again, *should cause great searching of heart*. Suppose I had died when last I was sick—was I then prepared to die? Woman, you remember when you last were stretched upon that sickbed and even the physician had given you up for hopeless? God spared you. But if He had not, where now would your soul be? Let your conscience answer that question and it may be that it will make you tremblingly say, "I should have been like unto them that go down into the pit."

If it had been your lot, my Hearers, some of you to have perished as this friend of ours has done during the past week, I dare not have said of you, "Lord, we thank You that it has pleased You to take this, our Brother, to Yourself." I could not have uttered a sentence of hope concerning you. I should have forged a lie had I comforted your friends by holding out a fraction of hope concerning your soul's salvation, for alas, are there not some of you who are Gospel-hardened, and grow worse rather than better?

While we are preaching to you, and pleading with you, and weeping for you to turn to Christ. And while we are trying to lift up Jesus upon His Cross in the hope that the Spirit may thereby attract you, you are getting to look upon the Gospel as an old, old tale, and upon the preacher himself as one whom you have heard so often, that really he is growing quite tedious and dull. Ah, there are some of you whom I could stir *once*, as a thunderclap, or a flash of lightning would have startled you, but you can almost sleep under my voice now. God knows I am willing enough to confess my own want of zeal and earnestness.

But still, my Hearers, it is not *that* which keeps some of you from coming to Christ. It is because you keep putting off the day of repentance by perpetual procrastination. You live in a continual suicide, always destroying your own soul. Meanwhile, that which does not melt you, hardens you, and so you grow worse and worse, ripening like tares for the fire. My dear Friends, let the judgments of God lead you to try your hearts and to see what your state before God may be. "Beware lest He take you away with His stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver you."

To those of us who are Believers in Christ, restoration from sickness and the privilege of again coming up to God's House after an absence from it through illness, *should suggest renewed activity*. Be careful! Be careful!

For behind you are the flying wheels of the chariot of Death, and the axles are growing red hot with speed. Fly, Man, if you would accomplish your lifework, for you have not a moment to spare! I think I see my work before me—the wheat ripe unto the harvest—“broad acres and wide fields”—multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision!

“Arise,” says the Master, “reap for me!” I have reaped until my arm aches and my head swims. I wipe the hot sweat from my weary brow and would gladly rest awhile, but He says, “Reap! Reap! Reap! Reap while the morning’s dew is falling! Reap while the hot sun scorches the ripening corn! Reap while the sun is setting! Reap until he has quite gone down. Then you shall rest from your labors. But until then your work shall not be done!” Am I to reap alone?

My Brothers and Sisters, there are many new, bright sickles—here is one for each of you. Up and to the fields, my fellow reapers! Men and women, up from your lethargy. Woe unto you that are at ease in Zion, that lie upon beds of down and forget that men are making their beds in Hell! Get up and begin to be troubled for the sorrows of God’s people, for the deaths of sinners, for the destruction of this great city. If ever Jonah’s soul was stirred within him as he thought of Nineveh, much more ought yours and mine to be stirred with the burden of this great London.

There is no time to waste. Men are dying! Hell is filling! How dare you loiter! Again I sound the alarm. Work, O you saints of the Lord, with all your might! Work with both your hands, by night and by day! Sow beside all waters! In the morning sow your seed and in the evening withhold not your hand. Let, then, the nearness of death and the shortness of life be to us as double spurs to stimulate our jaded spirits to fresh action.

What need I say more? You who are scholars in the college of affliction are more fit to instruct me than I am to teach you. I shall but add this one thought—surely, if it is the Lord who brings down to the grave—and He may do it at any day, *we ought to be very watchful*. Are we not, many of us, like the virgins of the parable? We have fallen asleep. We have our lamps with us, but are not they almost out? It is the dead hour of night and all things are quiet. Methinks I hear a cry which ought to startle every sleeper—“Behold, the Bridegroom comes! Go out to meet Him!”

Can you sleep after that? Do I not see you startled? You rub your drowsy eyes. You look at your lamps and you find the oil gone. You seek to trim them and the cry fills you with alarm and confusion, “Behold, the Bridegroom comes! Go out to meet Him!” But some of you have no oil, and now you try to borrow it where it is not to be had. Alas for you, for you will be shut out, and shut out forever! Others of you have oil in your vessels, but you need hastily to trim your lamps or else the Bridegroom will come and find you sleeping.

The Lord grant that as He may come today, as you, sitting there in your seat, may die. As I, standing here, may cease to breathe before the next word shall come from my lips, we may all be ready—

***“That awful, that tremendous day,
Is coming, who shall tell? For as a thief
Unheard, unseen, it steals with silent pace
Through night’s dark gloom. Perhaps as here I stand,
And rudely talk of these tremendous themes,***

**Soon shall the tongue be checked, and dumb the mouth
That lisps the faltering strain.
O Power supreme, You Guardian of my life,
Preserve me from a dread surprise in death.
From ways where I might weep to find a grave,
Keep You Your servant by Your mighty Grace.
O may Your heavenly summons never disturb,
Nor come unwelcome, to my waiting heart
But find me rapt in meditation high,
Hymning my great Creator! Or in prayer,
Bringing the blessing down upon the crowd;
In earnest work for Jesus, lifting up
His Cross and glory of His saving name.”**

Be watchful, Brothers and Sisters, for the Lord brings down to the grave, and from that grave He brings us not up again to work, though He will bring us up to the reward and to the rest which remain for the people of God. I shall now leave the text as it stands naturally. And briefly, but O may the Spirit of God help me to do it earnestly, try to speak of it in a spiritual sense.

II. OUR TEXT SEEMS TO INDICATE A STATE OF HEART THROUGH WHICH THOSE PASS WHO ARE BROUGHT TO GOD. There always is, in every case, though not to the same degree, a stripping time before there is a clothing time. There must be an emptying before there is a filling. There is the digging out of the foundations before the building up of the house. There is a time in which this verse is fulfilled—“The Lord kills and makes alive: He brings down to the grave and brings up.”

Let me describe now, for the comfort of those who are passing through the same, what that state of heart is in which the Lord brings down to the grave. I shall speak now experimentally, for if there breathes one soul on earth that can speak experimentally here, I am that man.

The sinner is led, first of all, *to hear his own sentence pronounced*. He was getting careless and thoughtless before, but now he is brought to *think*. Thinking, he perceives his sins. Perceiving his sins, he fears an angry God looking down from Heaven. No, with His sword drawn, reaching down from Heaven, to smite him on account of his iniquities. Well do I remember when I stood speechless at God’s bar. Not a word had I to answer Him with for one sin of a thousand.

When I read, “Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them,” I knew that that curse was upon me, for I had not continued in *anything*, much less in *all things* written in the Book of the Law. It seemed to me as though I saw the Judge open the book. Not to read my indictment—for that had already been published—but to proclaim the sentence. The trial had been gone through. I myself had made confession of my crimes, and now the Judge put on the black cap and commanded me to be taken to the place from which I was to suffer eternal wrath.

When that sentence was to be executed He did not tell me, but it appeared to me as if it must come the next moment. And if it did come, I knew I could not blame the justice of God, for I deserved it well. Is that *your* position? Oh, where are you tonight, poor condemned Sinner? Perhaps I cannot see you, for the crowd is great, nor can you see me, for you

are in a corner, but yet you are bowing your head and saying, "Ah, that is just my case. I am cursed and I deserve it. God is angry with the sinner every day, I am a sinner and deserve that anger."—

***"There is a dreadful Hell
And everlasting pains,
Where sinners must with devils dwell,
In darkness, fire, and chains."***

"That is my lot," you are saying. And you are wringing your hands while you are speechless as to any self-justification and are only able to say, "It is most just. I deserve it well"?

Further than this—the convicted sinner is often made to feel not only the sentence and the justice of it, *but the very horror of death itself*. You may have read in the narrative of the old American war of the execution of deserters. They were brought out one bright morning, while yet the dew was on the grass and were bid to kneel down, each man in his coffin. And then a file of soldiers stepped forth. The word was given and each man fell down in his coffin in which he was to be buried. Such things as the punishment of deserters are common in every war, but what must be the horror of the man who stands there, knowing that the bullet is waiting to reach his heart?

In the old wars, they used to have a black heart sown on the man's breast and all the soldiers were to take aim and fire at that. Why the man must suffer a thousand deaths while he stood waiting for the word of command! I have stood there, spiritually. And there are hundreds here who have thus faced their eternal doom. They have felt the horrors of death get hold upon them and the pangs of Hell encompass them—and they have found trouble and sorrow. O Sinners, if you know yourselves, you will soon feel this, for do you not know that if you are without Christ, you are standing in that position now?

The great guns of the Law, charged to the muzzle, are all pointed at you. They do but wait the fatal moment when the uplifted finger of Justice shall bid them be discharged. And where will you be then? Lost beyond hope! Ruined beyond remedy! Beware, Sinner, beware of this. "Well," says one, "that is the horror which I felt tonight. I felt as I came along that it was a wonder the earth did not open and swallow me up. And though I am now in God's House, I feel as if such a wretch as I am ought not to be in the company of the faithful. I wonder that I am still alive. I am ready to cry out with the hymn writer—

***"Tell it, unto sinners tell;
I am, I am out of Hell."***

Ah, dear Friends, this is another part of the experience through which many are called to go before the Lord who brings them down to the grave and vouchsafes to bring them up again.

Then there is yet a further death which the convicted sinner is made to feel and that is *the death of inability*. While we are unregenerate, we think that we can do everything. Nothing is so easy, we imagine then, as believing. It is mere child's play to pray to God. Quite a trifle to turn to God and get a new heart. Yes, but when man begins to work in real earnest he finds it a very different thing. He feels like one in a swoon. There lies a woman who has fainted. You tell her it is but to put up her finger, to open

her eyes, to move her limbs, to walk into the fresh air, to drink a draught of water and to recover. Yes, but she cannot do any of these things.

In one sense she can. The faculties are there, but they are all in a dormant state and so utterly powerless that all the woman is conscious of is her inability. Such is the state of the sinner when under a sense of guilt. He feels that deadly swoon of death into which Adam threw all his children. Now he moans most wretchedly, in words like those of good old John Newton—

***“I would, but cannot sing,
I would, but cannot pray.
For Satan meets me when I try,
And frightens my soul away.
I would, but can’t repent,
Though I endeavor often.
This stony heart can never relent
Till Jesus makes it soft.
I would, but cannot love,
Though wooed by love Divine.
No arguments have power to move
A soul so base as mine.
O could I but believe!
Then all would easy be;
I would, but cannot—Lord, relieve,
My help must come from You!”***

He feels himself brought into a perfect state of death, as if a stupor had gone through every nerve and frozen every muscle rigidly in its place. Even the lifting of his little finger to help himself appears to be beyond his power. I am glad, dear Friend, you are brought here, for I know the Lord never does empty a soul thoroughly of all creature-strength without very soon showing what the Creator can do! If He has brought you down to this grim sepulcher of corruption, dishonor, weakness and self-despair, He will shortly bring you up again. It is when you are strong that I am afraid of you. But when you are weak, then my hopes are high.

The climax of your disease is just the dawn of my hopes. Your direst poverty is the time when I expect to see you enriched—for when you are completely emptied and have nothing, then Jesus Christ will be your strength and your salvation. Trust Him to be your All in All now that you are nothing at all. There must, at least in some degree, be a sense of thus being brought down to the grave before there will be a bringing up again.

No doubt, the man *now sees death written upon all his hopes*. There was a door through which I had hoped to enter eternal life. I had spent much time in painting it, and making it comely to look upon. It seemed to me to have a golden knocker, a marble threshold, and posts and lintels of mahogany—and I thought it was the door of life for me. But now what do I see? I see a great black Cross on it, and over it there is written, “Lord, have mercy upon us.” This door is the door to Heaven by my own good works, which I thought full sure would always be open to me.

But lo, I see that all my best works are bad and, “Lord, have mercy upon us,” is the highest thing my works can produce for me! Still I must cry, even over them, “God have mercy upon my good works. Forgive me for my best deeds, for I need to be forgiven even for these.” The death of legal hope is the salvation of the soul. I like to see legal hope swung up like a

traitor. There let him hang to rot before the sun, more cursed than any other that was ever hanged on a tree. O, Soul, have done with him, for while you are so fond of him, while you treat him with the best you have, and set him at the head of your table, you are ruined. But when you slay him and drive him from you, then it is that your joy and your hope begin. No more, then, concerning this death—"The Lord brings down."

But now a word or two of comfort for any of you who are brought down to this spiritual grave. There are many precious promises for such. "Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." "Though you have lain among the pots, yet shall you be as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold." Remember the experience of Jonah—"For You had cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas. And the floods compassed me about: all Your billows and Your waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of Your sight. Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple...I went down to the bottoms of the mountains. The earth with her bars was about me forever: yet have You brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God."

Let the hope of Jeremiah be your consolation—"But though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of merit." You that are brought very low, you feel that you are wounded tonight. Do you not know how many promises there are to the wounded ones? "He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." Was not Jesus Christ sent on purpose for this—"to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound?" The name of our God is "Jehovah-Rophi: the Lord that heals you."

His own words are, "I will restore health unto you and I will heal you of your wounds." "I have seen his ways and will heal him: I will lead him, also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners." You are tonight like the dead. Do you not remember that passage in Ezekiel, fraught with rich mercy to you, where the Lord speaks concerning Israel, that they said their bones were dry, their hope was lost, and they were cut off from their parts? But, nevertheless, He would raise them up and they should live in His sight? "Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus says the Lord God, Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

"And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put My Spirit in you and you shall live and I shall place you in your own land: then shall you know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it, says the Lord." Remember how Hosea, speaking of the dead who were slain as you are, says, "The third day He will raise us up and we shall live in His sight"? And that passage we read just now—"I kill and I make alive"—do you not see the comfort of it?

That "and" is a diamond rivet, joining the two sentences together. You cannot separate the, "I kill," from the, "I make alive," for where God kills by His Spirit, He always quickens by the same. He does not in this life kill our legal hopes and our carnal security without by-and-by making us

alive. You will tell me that the Lord has withdrawn from you. But, oh, what a multitude of promises there are for you! “For a small moment have I forsaken you. But with great mercies will I gather you.” “If any walk in darkness and see no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord.” So that though you have lost the comfortable hope of His love, you are still to trust in Him.

“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,” said Job. And so do you, though you are slain, still trust—for there is still ground for trust—no sinner was ever brought too low for God to bring him up again. Others have been as low as you are now. Remember Heman the Ezrahite, whose mournful notes we read just now in the eighty-eighth Psalm. What words are these—“You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Your wrath lies hard upon me and You have afflicted me with all Your waves...I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer Your terrors I am distracted. Your fierce wrath goes over me. Your terrors have cut me off”?

Yet this man of God received comforts, after all, from the God of his salvation. You yourself are not brought so low as you would be if you had a still clearer view of your sins. Remember, God’s mercy is so great that you may sooner drain the sea of its water, or deprive the sun of his light, or make space too narrow—than diminish the great mercy of God. So that though brought to the very last pinch, and dead like the free among the slain that go down into the pit, you may still find mercy in the Lord our God.

Let me beg you never to be satisfied until you get a Savior. Do not be content with any comfort short of faith in Christ. Do recollect, dear Friends, that you must not be satisfied because you have good desires, or because you experience holy feelings. When friends say to you, “God has begun the good work in you, and you may be content, for He will carry it on”—remember, you can never be sure that God has begun the good work till you have believed in Christ. Believe in Jesus Christ! That is, as far as you are concerned, the first clear proof that God has begun a saving work in you.

And it is for you, though dead and ruined, though swooning and fainting, and unable to do anything as of yourself, to swoon into the arms of the Savior. It is for you to faint, as many a child has done, into its father’s arms—to die in the bosom of the Savior and lie buried in His grave. Oh, this is a happy, happy way of being nothing—that Christ may be All in All. And now I close, for time fails us, by just noticing, that where God has thus killed and brought down, we may rest assured He will certainly bring up again.

Beloved Friends, the Lord does not send His Holy Spirit to bring sinners to a sense of their need whom He does not intend to save, for that were a waste of His Divine energy. He leaves reprobates, for the most part, to their natural hardness and impassive hearts. But those whom He deigns to make sensible of guilt, those whom He deigns to condemn in their consciences, and to write the sentence of death in their members—these He intends, sooner or later, to bring up again from their despondency. Why, it stands to reason that He will! “Ah,” said one good old Divine once to a

fainting sinner, “You cost Christ too much for Him to let you perish! He bought you too dearly to let you be a castaway forever.”

Remember, since you are His—and we have a comfortable hope that you are because you sigh and cry and have a blessed hunger and thirst after Him—since you are His, I say, you are very precious in His sight and He will not, therefore, suffer you to be lost. “Oh,” says one, “can I be a child of God after all, and yet be brought so low as I have been?” Some months ago, there were two women who kept a shop and they put all their money, some hundred pounds, in sovereigns, under the fireplace at night, in a bag, to save it from thieves. The cleaning girl cleared away the ashes, and of course, cleared away the sovereigns, too, and they were swept into the dust heap.

Well, this gold might have said to itself, “Now I am going to the dust heap! How worthless I am, because I am put here among the lowest dregs—here is a piece of old rag—and here a rotten mass of filth. I cannot be a gold sovereign or else I should not be cast here.” Ah, but you see, when they came to rake the heap they raked the golden coins out again! The sovereigns were, by-and-by discovered. They might be in the ashes, but they were not to lie there forever.

So you may be brought to feel yourselves the lowest, the worst, and the most useless of all creatures—but if the Lord has set His love upon you, you are gold in His esteem—none the less because of the ashes and the dunghill upon which you may be cast. And He will yet bring you up again. Remember, there may be a work of Divine Grace in your heart and yet you may not know it. There are many pebbles in the bottom of a river which you cannot see, but they are there. There may be some degree of faith and hope and love, and yet your soul may be so much disturbed that you cannot as yet perceive it. Or the Lord may be really bringing you up from the grave and yet the muddiness of your thoughts and the darkness of your soul’s eyes may prevent your perceiving what the Lord is doing for you.

Still, I repeat it, He *will* bring you up again. O let your faith seize hold on this comforting assurance. If it is not done yet, it will be in due time. “Well, how will it come?” says one, “how will the Lord give me comfort?” My dear Friend, I do not know the manner of it. It may come suddenly—before this service is over you may feel all the joy that a Believer can know. It may be that the Lord will reveal Himself to you as you are walking home, or tonight while you are in prayer before you go to your rest. Possibly it will come gradually—first the blade, then the ear—and then the full corn in the ear.

There are some to whom the light of life comes as the light of the rising sun—first a glimmering twilight. Then the ruddy hues upon the clouds. Then a flood of light and afterwards the sun has fully risen. It may be so with you. But there is one thing I know—when your hope does come, when God quickens you from your grave—it will be just at that moment when you are led to look away from your own feelings, your own doings, and your own willings, and to look to Christ alone.

I heard the other day a trembling woman—I hope she will yet be rejoicing in the Lord—I heard her saying she was afraid she never should be saved. I told her I was afraid so, too, for she *would not* believe in Christ,

but was always raising questions and doubts. Well, she said, she did not know whether the Lord had begun a good work in her. I told her I did not know that either, and that I did not enquire about it. I knew what the Gospel said and that was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." But she said, perhaps it was not God's time. Ah, I said, "Today is the accepted time; today is the day of salvation."

Ah, she said, but she could not believe. I asked her why she could not believe. Could she not believe what Christ said? Was He a liar? Could she dare to say that she could not believe her God? Well, she did not exactly mean that, but then there were her sins. But, I said, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleans us from all sin." Well, she said, she hoped she should have the strivings of the Spirit and that one day she should get right. My sister, said I, I charge you before God, your business is to come to Christ and to come to Christ *now*. But if you stop anywhere short of that, in any sort of feelings or experience, then you will never get to your journey's end.

A believing sinner's business is with Jesus and not with the Spirit's operations. The Spirit works salvation in him, but he is nowhere bid to look to the Spirit for salvation. No man can come to the Father but by Christ. And no man can come to an acknowledgment of the Spirit's operations but by a sight of Christ. I grant you that the Spirit brings us to the Cross, but we do not know when we come that the Spirit is at work with us. By a mysterious force we come to Jesus and then afterwards we look back and say, "Why, it must have been the Spirit of God that drew me to Christ." You are not, however, to *begin* with that—you are to begin by *looking at the Cross*.

Although I have been talking to you about how God wills to bring us down, I have not set up these feelings as a standard of experience, or as being the grounds of our salvation. A sense of need is a sign of our salvation, for no soul ever will come to live through the life of Christ unless he has first been slain by the great sword of the Law. No sinner ever comes empty-handed to Jesus till he has been knocked down and robbed of all the worthless trash which he prizes as jewels. But still, I say for all this, the thing which saves the soul is for that dead, helpless, swooning, feeble, lost, ruined soul, to look to Him who hangs on yonder Cross—where the Just suffers for the unjust, that He may bring us to God.

This is how the Lord brings us up again. I know there will be some who will say they have not felt all I have described to any great degree or extent. Remember, again, I do not set this up as a standard to keep you from Christ. I have been preaching thus in order to catch you who do not come because you have terrors—not to frighten those who come without them. There are two sorts of you we have to deal with. Some of you say you cannot believe in Christ because you have such terrible convictions. You wish you had not felt them. And another class of you say if you had these horrible terrors, you could believe in Christ. There is no pleasing either of you.

Now, remember, you that have the convictions, the Lord who brings you low will bring you up again. And you that have not the convictions, you still have this preached to you—"Jesus Christ came into the world to

save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Come to Jesus just as you are, you shall have such conviction as the Lord sees fit for you. You shall, indeed, be led in the same way as others. Though, being blind, you will not know at the time that it is the same way. You will be killed and you will be made alive. You will be emptied and you will be filled. You will be made nothing and Jesus shall be your All in All.

O that my Master would bless these few rambling remarks to some of you. I do not like drawing the bow at a venture. I cannot stand that metaphor. I love to draw the bow at a certainty, to smite some of you and I would to God that the Lord would do that now. The Lord greatly blesses that class over which our dear sister, Mrs. Bartlett, presides—but there are still some in it who are unconverted. O that the Lord might bring some of them in tonight! You young women who take an interest in the things of God—may the Lord now decide you. I want to speak personally and affectionately to you now, because you may be in the grave before another Sunday.

As I look around me here, I miss some of my congregation, and in such a large congregation as this, there are at least two who depart every week. I suppose, according to the natural order of things, two of you must die each week. And when I think of this solemn fact, I ask—where are the two? Where are the two who are to be the victims of death this week? “Perhaps they are at home, sick,” you say. Ah, well, perhaps, also, they are here in good, strong health. Prepare to meet your God, young men, for you are not too young to die! And you in the Sunday school. I am so pleased to hear of the boys being converted and of the girls being brought in.

But, O children, some of you may soon make a little hillock in the cemetery with your young bodies! May the Lord make you young Samuels. Remember, it was Samuel’s mother who penned this text—may you be led to feel your need of Jesus and then to find Him for the salvation of your soul. You who are diligent in business, but are not fervent in spirit, you will be busy buying and selling all the week, but oh, do not sell your souls! “Buy the Truth and sell it not.” You, gray heads, yonder, what a multitude of old men we always have in this assembly and I am glad to see the fathers here, though I often wonder how aged Christians can be fed by such a child as I am.

But still, those gray hairs only make a fool’s cap for you if you have grown old in sin as well as old in years. God help you, that you may yet be made babes in Grace though you are on the very verge of the grave.

God add His blessing, but we will not separate till we have sung this one verse—and I beg none to sing it but those who deeply can feel it—

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

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BEGGARS BECOMING PRINCES

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*“He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.
1 Samuel 2:8.*

GOD sometimes does this in Providence. History records several very remarkable instances of persons who have sprung from the lowest ranks of society, or from the depths of poverty, yet who have mounted to a throne. When a certain king, in the olden days, was led in chains behind the chariot of his conqueror, he was constantly observed to look at the wheel and smile. And when he was asked why he did so, he said that it was because he noticed that those spokes of the wheel which were uppermost, at one time became the lowest not long after, while those which were lowest, in their turn took their place on high—and he would not wonder if it should be the same with him—and that he would again become a king and that his conqueror would be a captive. So strange are the workings of Providence that, however low anyone may be in temporal circumstances, he need not give way to despair, but he may cherish hopes of better times coming to him.

About that matter, however, I have nothing to say tonight. I am going to speak of the far greater changes that have been worked by Divine Grace. We know that many who were “poor” in a spiritual sense, such “beggars,” as words can surely describe, have been, by Sovereign Grace, lifted up from the dunghill of their natural degradation, set among the princes of the blood royal of Heaven, and are even now inheriting the Throne of Glory, or are on their way to it! It is concerning this poverty and its cure that I want to talk to you in the hope that the Holy Spirit may so guide my words that they shall be for the encouragement of those who are seeking salvation by Christ Jesus.

In our text we see, first, *man's sad plight*. And, secondly, *God's Infinite Grace*.

I. First, then, here is MAN'S SAD PLIGHT. He is described both by his character and by his position. He is a beggar—that is his character. He is on a dunghill—that is his position.

Fallen man, whether he knows it or not, is spiritually a beggar. What is a beggar? He is one who is penniless. Empty his pockets and you will not find a single farthing there. Take his old clothes from his back and see what they will fetch—no one will give a penny for them. He has not a foot of land that he can call his own and the last six feet which he is pretty sure to have, must be given to him by the parish, and it will perhaps be even then given grudgingly. His old hat has almost lost its crown and his feet can be seen through his very dilapidated shoes. The old proverb says that a beggar can never be bankrupt, but it would be more correct to say that he is never anything else but bankrupt! Do any of you see your own portraits here? I can see just what I was by nature—utterly penniless. If you turn a natural man inside out, you cannot find a farthing's worth of merit in him. The very rags with which he professes to cover himself are so filthy that he would be far better without them. You may search into a man's thoughts, words and actions. You may ransack them and turn them over again, and again and again—and you may put the most charitable construction that you can upon them, but if you judge according to truth, and according to the Word of God—which is the only true way of judging, you must say of all that is in man, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Never was a beggar so short of money as a sinner is short of merit!

I want to preach experimentally tonight, so I ask you how many of us have felt this, how many of us are realizing our spiritual poverty now? Never will a man become rich in faith until first he has learned that he is penniless so far as his own merit is concerned. You must be emptied, you must be drained dry, you must be made to feel and to confess that in your flesh there dwells no good thing, or else the Sovereign Mercy of God and the riches of His loving kindness shall never be your heritage.

But a beggar is not only penniless, he is also without a trade. The only thing that he can do is to beg. If he had ever learned a trade, he might turn to some handicraft and so earn his living. There are many who would be willing to give him a day's work, but there is nothing that he can do. If you should lend him any tools, he would cut his fingers with them, and then come to you to bind them up. He knows nothing and is good for nothing—he is shiftless, useless, and other men are eager to be rid of him! He is like an ill weed that only cumberes the ground. He is a hopeless, helpless man, unable to earn a penny—and such is every man of Adam spiritually. Not only has he no merit, but it is impossible for him to ever earn any! I have seen the foolish sons of men trying to win merit, hunting shadows, working in their dreams, seeking to build substantial houses upon sandy foundations, or to make garments out of spiders' webs. Yet they have wearied themselves in vain, for not a particle of merit have they ever been able to earn or win! Listen, Sinner, there is as great a hope of a beggar getting rich as there is of your attaining to Eternal Life by any deeds of your own! No, some beggars do, by scraping and saving, manage to hoard up what is to them comparative wealth, but you may

seek to scrape and to save as much as you can—you may watch your morals, and be careful in your deportment, yet not a step nearer Heaven will you be for all your pains! No, you must be born-again! God must intervene on your behalf. You must be saved by the Grace of God, or not at all, for “by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.”—

***“Not for our duties or deserts,
But of His own abounding Grace,
He works salvation in our hearts,
And forms a people for His praise.”***

Further, though there are exceptions to the rule, it is so generally true that it may form part of the description—a beggar is usually a man without a character. The less that is said about his character, the better. He has a habit of helping himself when others do not help him, only that he helps himself to what does not belong to him! If there is anything lying handy, the beggar is very apt to appropriate it. I suppose that the largest part of beggary results from sin and that you could hardly read any beggar’s true history without, at the same time, reading the story of wrongdoing. Certainly this is the case concerning spiritual beggary, for the sad state of humanity is not one of misfortune, but of sin. Well do I recollect when the Truth of God stared me in the face and I saw that my character was such that it would have been an act of justice on God’s part if He had shut me up in Hell. Ask a convinced sinner about his character and see what he will say! Before God opens his eyes and shows him what he really is, he plumes his feathers as proudly as any peacock spreads his fine tail. But when he sees himself as he is in God’s sight, he is anxious to hide his head anywhere! He feels that he is such a man of corruption—to use Augustine’s strong expression, “such a walking dunghill”—that he loathes himself and never dares to open his mouth before God except to cry, “Unclean! Unclean!” “I have heard of You,” said Job, “by the hearing of the ear; but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” A sight of God will soon show us what our own character is. “The heavens are not clean in His sight,” said Eliphaz, “how much more abominable and filthy is man which drinks iniquity like water.” May the Lord graciously give us this humbling view of ourselves, for we shall never seek true holiness until we are conscious of our own unholiness! That same Divine Power which reveals to us the Light of God, also shows us the darkness of self. It is brightness that discovers dimness, holiness that reveals unholiness and the purity of God that shows the impurity of man.

I trust that these three points have been burned into our minds and hearts by the Holy Spirit. And if they have, thanks be to His holy name for it, for it is true of all of us by nature, that we think we are “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,” while all the time, we are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” But

when, by Grace, any one of us is brought to say with David, “I am poor and needy,” with him we can add, “yet the Lord thinks upon me.”

Again, the beggar is usually a man without any friends, or without any friends that are any good to him. In driving through various country districts, I have often seen this notice prominently displayed, “All vagrants found begging in this parish will be prosecuted.” Yes, that is English Law which reckons begging as a crime and I suppose it is also an offense to *give to beggars*, but that is an offense which some people are never likely to commit. Nobody cares to harbor beggars. They apply to a farmer, sometimes, and ask to be allowed to sleep in his barn, but he thinks so ill of them that he bids them begone from his premises for he will have nothing to do with them. If the beggar has any friends at all, they are only the companions who share his poverty who are generally as vile as he is and who can be of little or no service to him. And the natural man, as Adam left him, is one who has no friends to help him. I know that he has those whom he calls his friends, his companions in sin who make their kind of mirth for him, but they are really among his worst enemies—they cannot do him any good. He has no friends who can help him. The angels of God can only look upon him as a spectacle of Divine Mercy, marveling that he is still spared and wondering at his base ingratitude. But there is no hand in the heavens that can help a sinner except the hand of the Most High God! The saints on earth may look upon the man with pity and pray for him—

***“But feeble our compassion proves,
And can but weep where most it loves.”***

The poverty of sinners is too great for us to cure. We might as well attempt to fill a bag that is full of holes, or to fill to the brim a bottomless vessel, as seek by anything that we can do to bring a sinner nearer to God! No, Sinner, apart from God, you have not one friend who can help you! You have no merit with which to help yourself, no power to win any merit, no friend to get any merit for you and no character to be a recommendation to you. You are a beggar, indeed.

Then there is nobody who particularly cares for the beggar’s acquaintance. His company is not generally sought after. There are few who make such a supper as that which our Savior described, to which those who were in the highways and hedges were to be compelled to come. Men may give the beggar bread and a place to sleep, but they put him by himself, for he is not a person whom they would like to have in their houses—they know not what loathsome disease he might impart to any who consorted with him. Now just such is man in his natural state when the Holy Spirit makes him see himself as he is in God’s sight! I know that my own moral character was not worse than that of others and that it was indeed better than the characters of many whom I knew—yet when the Lord opened my eyes to see myself as I really was in His sight, I felt that I was unfit even to go up to His House and I wondered how Believers could

let me join in the hymns they were singing, or take any other part in the service! I have known the time when I would have liked to occupy the worst seat in the Chapel and when I would rather have been where no one could see me, that I might listen to God's Word alone. My going up to the Lord's House in those days was like the dog's coming into the dining room when he tries to slip unobserved under the table and to watch for the crumbs that fall to the ground. He feels that he is there only on sufferance—he does not take his seat at the table, for he feels that he has no right to do so. I would not give much for a man's conviction of sin if it does not produce in him a very loathsome idea of himself and make him marvel how it is that the mercy of God can ever be outstretched to such a wretch, so vile and self-condemned as he is! If there is anyone here in such a condition as this, it is very likely that he is saying, "Why, I feel just like that, but I thought that mine was an utterly hopeless case." No, poor Soul, your case is a very hopeful one, for it is the beggar, the loathsome, leprous, foul, filthy beggar covered with disease and defilement, whom God will lift up from the dunghill and set among princes, and make him inherit the Throne of Glory!

To complete the picture, let me add that the beggar is one whose entire dependence is upon charity. He knows that he cannot claim anything from you. As he holds out his hand to you, or follows you with his importunity, he is fully aware that whatever he may get will come to him, not according to law, but rather against the law, and simply as an act of grace. Such beggars are we with regard to spiritual gifts. If we are to receive pardon, it must come to us by Divine Grace. If we ever become reconciled to God by the death of His Son, it must be by an act of charity which we can do nothing to deserve. The beggar is a man whose only virtues are his boldness and his importunity—and as for you, Sinner, there is nothing that becomes you so well as to press boldly to God's Throne and appeal to the graciousness and goodness of His Nature and especially to that display of His Love which was given in the Person of His bleeding and dying Son! There is nothing more fitting in you than to be importunate, to knock and knock, and knock again with a holy resolve to take no denial! Your sins are your most urgent reasons for coming to Christ. Your rags are your best livery. Your emptiness your only fitness! Your ruin is that upon which you are to look and you are to go to Christ in that ruin just as you are! As you go to Him, go boldly, for you are asking a great mercy from One who has a great heart! You are knocking at the door of the most hospitable King who ever invited beggars to come to Him! Come to Him with a holy boldness and perseverance—knowing that you will perish unless He looks upon you with eyes of love—and resolving that if you must perish, it shall be as a poor mendicant pleading that for His mercy's sake, He would have pity upon you! No one ever perished who came to Him like that—and nor will you!

Thus I have described the character of the spiritual beggar, but it is much blacker than I have painted it. Now we are briefly to consider *the beggar's position*. According to the text, he is on a dunghill—that is the only throne he has by nature.

Why is the spiritual beggar said to be on a, dunghill? I think it must be, first, to show that he is as worthless as the rest of the stuff that is there. If the Lord shall only reveal to us our filthy condition as it appears in His sight, we shall feel that it is a positive nuisance, and we shall cry to Him, “Take it away, O Lord, take it away!” Sin is an offense to the nostrils of the thrice-holy Jehovah even more than a dunghill can ever be to the most delicately active man or woman! And when we realize our true condition as sinners, we feel that a dunghill is a fitting place for such a mass of defilement and corruption.

Why is the spiritual beggar said to be on a dunghill? I think it is, next, because that is the most suitable place for the best thing that he has. The only thing a man can trust to before he comes to Christ is his own righteousness, and what is the verdict of Scripture upon that? You know well what it is—“We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” The best things that we have, those that we reckon to be of righteousnesses, are only like filthy rags that find a fitting resting place on a dunghill! So if our best things are only fit for such a position, it is no wonder that we, ourselves, in our natural state, are relegated to the dunghill with the rest of the unclean things that are thrown away there!

I think the spiritual beggar is also said to be on a dunghill because that place is typical of the best joy that he has. An unconverted man has some joy, some merriment, some pleasure of a certain sort—but what is carnal joy, after all? Think of the character of the places where the ungodly go for their amusement, or of the various ways in which they seek to gratify the lusts of the flesh and then ask yourselves if anything is a more appropriate emblem of them than a dunghill with all its filth and abominations! So, when the man who is a beggar with regard to spiritual things mounts his throne, and sits down upon its softest seat, it is only a dunghill!

That dunghill is also an emblem of his end. It is not only a symbol of the corruption that awaits his body after death, but it is also a type of the final doom of the body and soul when they are flung away as worthless refuse fit only for the dunghill. There have been sinners who, even in this life, have had at last a glimpse of the ruin that sin has worked in them, and who have, as it were, looked into the Hell that stood ready to receive them. I have personally witnessed some terrible experiences in which men, helplessly and hopelessly lost, have been upon the very brink of Hell, and I have then understood what it meant to be a spiritual beggar on a dunghill.

I have tried to make the meshes of my net so small that none of you might be able to escape from it, but I see some who seem determined not to be caught by it. They turn on their heel and say, "All that we have been hearing does not relate to us! We are not beggars and we are not sitting on a dunghill—we are most respectable members of society." Well then, Sirs, why are you here? Why do you read your Bibles? Why do you pray? If you need no mercy, why do you come to the House of Mercy, and call upon the God of Mercy? We have no Gospel to preach to such as you, for even Christ, Himself said, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Go, you Pharisee, and say as he did in the temple of old, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are"—yet no justification shall drop like blessed dew upon you! But come, Publican, you who dare not lift up so much as your eyes unto Heaven! I think I hear you as you smite upon your breast, dolefully crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." You shall go down to your house justified rather than the other, "for everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted." "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall"—but to the humble and the contrite, God reveals the abundance of His mercy and to the poor in spirit He gives the riches of His Divine Grace!

II. Now, as my time has nearly gone, I must speak very briefly upon the second part of my subject, which is GOD'S INFINITE GRACE. "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill; to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory."

As deeply as they fell, so high are they raised! No, they are raised still higher than they were before, so that Dr. Watts sang truly when he said that God—

***"Has made our standing more secure
Than 'twas before we fell."***

We lost much through Adam's transgression, but we get all that back and much more through Christ's obedience and death, so that where sin abounded, Grace does much more abound, and—

***"In Christ the tribes of Adam boast
More blessings than their father lost."***

Our text tells us *what is done for the poor beggar upon the dunghill*—he is set among princes and made to inherit the Throne of Glory. So, first, he is clothed as princes are clothed. The glorious robe of Christ's righteousness is thrown around this naked beggar and now he is clad as well as the best of the princes by whom he is surrounded! And he, also, fares as well as they do! Manna from Heaven is his daily portion and water from the Rock constantly supplies his needs! And, like all the saints, in a spiritual fashion he feeds upon the flesh and blood of Christ, who is now his life!

He is also guarded as princes are, and far more securely guarded than any earthly prince unless he, also, is a child of God, for the strong right arm of the Almighty is his perpetual defense. He is also housed as princes are, for he dwells in the secret place of the Most High, and abides under the shadow of the Almighty. He has a seat at the table of the royalty of Heaven, for he is of the blood royal, a son of the Highest and of the household of God.

Furthermore, he is rich as princes are. Are they heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ? So is he a sharer in that high honor. Are they priests and kings unto God? He, also, is a priest and a king. Do they say, "Abba, Father"? He, too, can say the same. Does each of the princes say, with, Thomas, "My Lord, and my God"? He too can say, "My Lord, and my God." Have they been pardoned? So has he. Have they acceptance, adoption, calling, regeneration, election, eternal security. He has the same, for however foul and filthy a sinner may have been, when God calls him by His Grace, and adopts him into His family, He gives him not half the family inheritance, but the whole of it! He does not put off the big sinners with the leavings of the feast. When the father welcomed the prodigal home, again, he did not send him to the kitchen among the hired servants, but he killed for him the fatted calf and gave him a son's place at the table. It would be an eternal mercy if the Lord would allow us just to put our heads within the gates of Glory, but that is not His way of rewarding the travail of Christ's soul. Jesus Himself prayed, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am: that they may behold My Glory which You have given Me." And to His disciples He said, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." That is the position that is reserved even for the chief of sinners—with Christ where He is! What a wonderful change is in store for the beggar from the dunghill!—

***"To dwell with God, to feel His love,
Is the full Heaven enjoyed above!
God the sweet expectation now
Is the young dawn of Heaven below,"***

See then, Sinner, what the Lord does when "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the Throne of Glory." He gives them the full heritage of the saints on earth and then crowns it with the glorious inheritance of the saints in Heaven! There is nothing good that the Lord keeps back from them. All the promises of this blessed Book, all the blessing guaranteed by the Everlasting Covenant are theirs most richly to enjoy. Oh, that the Lord would come this very night and lift up some of you who are like the beggar upon the dunghill, and set you among princes and make you inherit the Throne of Glory!

Thus have I hurriedly set before you what is done for the beggar upon the dunghill, and I can only hint at the answer to the next question, *Who*

does it? “He raises up the poor out of the dust and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill.” If any of you saw a beggar lying on a dunghill and wanted to help him, I expect you would send your servants to lift him up from his unsavory resting place. I do not suppose you would go and do it yourselves. It would be very kind for a man to arrange for a beggar in such a position to be taken care of and so to do it by proxy. But listen to this. “HE raises up the poor out of the dust, and (HE) lifts up the beggar from the dunghill.” The great Lord of Heaven and earth does this work Himself! He does not do it by proxy. There are two verses in the 147th Psalm at which I have wondered thousands of times—“He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. He counts the number of the stars. He calls them all by their names.” He who looses the bands of Orion, and brings forth Mazzaroth in his season, and guides Arcturus with his sons is the same Lord who bends down in tender pity over the broken in heart and binds up their wounds with a skill and success that no earthly surgeon can even equal! Oh, the matchless condescension of the great Lord of Love that He should thus pity a sinner, love a sinner, embrace a sinner and even lift up a sinner from a dunghill! No one else can do it. The minister here frankly confesses his inability to do it. Not all the holy angels together can do it! Only the Spirit of the living God, who first opens our eyes to see our state as beggars can lead us to look to Jesus Christ and find in Him everlasting riches and eternal salvation!

Now, lastly, *why does the Lord do this great act of Grace?* Why does He lift up the beggars from the dunghill? I cannot tell you any other reason than this—God does it because He wills to do it. Why does He thus look after some of the chief of sinners, and yet leaves many more respectable people to go on in their own way? I know no reason except that He does it because He wills to do it. His name and His nature are both Love, and it is characteristic of love to pour itself out on behalf of misery and helplessness. The Lord looks abroad and sees the poor, ruined, helpless soul, and straightway the floodgates of His heart go up and out flows the stream of His loving kindness and tender mercy!

Perhaps, someone asks, “Do I rightly understand you, Sir? I do not often go to a place of worship, but I was passing the Tabernacle and just stepped in. Now I am as bad as I well can be, you surely do not mean to say, Sir, that God loves me and such great sinners as I am?” Indeed, my dear Friend, I do mean to say it, and to say it upon the authority of God Himself. “What? Do you mean to tell me that God loves me as I am?” Yes, just as you are. “What? God loves an ungodly man?” Yes, here is a text to prove it—“God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ.” Why, if He had not loved us when we were dead in sins, He would never have loved us at all! And we would have remained dead in trespasses and sins. ‘Tis His great Grace that lifts a beggar from the

dunghill and sets him among princes! When poor Jeremiah was in the pit and likely to die of starvation, Ebedmelech the Ethiopian did not go to him and say, “Come up out of the pit and I will dress your wounds, and feed you.” He took men with ropes and some old rags to put under the Prophet’s arms, and so drew him out of the dungeon. In like manner, God does not say, “Now, Sinner, make yourself a saint, and then I will love you,” but He lets down the great rope of the Gospel, which is long enough to reach you wherever you may be, and He lines it with the soft rags of loving invitations—and then He lets you put them beneath your arms and trust to them as Jeremiah trusted to Ebedmelech’s ropes—and so you shall be drawn up out of sin’s dungeon. David did not say, “I climbed up out of the horrible pit, and then began to sing.” Oh, no! He said, “He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God.” David’s song, like Hannah’s, and like Mary’s, ascribes all Grace and Glory to God! And if you put your soul’s trust in Jesus, the one and only Savior, you also will—

***“Give all the Glory to His holy name
For to Him all the Glory belongs.”***

Oh, that some spiritual beggar may tonight be lifted up from the dunghill and set among princes, and the Lord shall have all the praise world without end! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 SAMUEL 2:1-10; LUKE 1:16-56.**

We shall read two portions of Holy Scripture, and may God the Holy Spirit bless us in the reading of His own Words. We shall first read in the First Book of Samuel, the 2nd Chapter, the Song of Hannah. You remember that Hannah was a woman of a sorrowful spirit. A womanly sorrow preyed upon her heart and brought her very low. Not so low, however, as to prevent her from constantly praying to God. Her prayers were heard and when she came up to the Lord’s House, the joyful mother of a son, she took care to remember her former supplication and to offer unto God thanksgiving. Hannah was a woman of great ability, perhaps the chief poetess of either the Old or the New Testament. I expect that Mary borrowed part of her Magnificat from the Song of Hannah—at least the recollection of that song must have been strong upon her when she sang what we shall presently read.

1 Samuel 2:1. *And Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoices in the LORD. My horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over my enemies because I rejoice in Your salvation.* Her deliverance seemed to her to be a type and symbol of the way in which God delivers all His people,

so she rejoiced in that great salvation which He works out for His people as a whole.

2-7. *There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside You: neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceedingly proud; let not arrogance come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread, and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren has born seven; and she that has many children is waxed feeble. The Lord kills, and makes alive: He brings down to the grave, and brings up. The LORD makes poor, and makes rich: He brings low, and lifts up. With what jubilation she sings of the way in which God deals with men, putting down the mighty and lifting up the lowly!*

8. *He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and He has set the world upon them.* Whatever solid thing it is that bears up the frame of this natural world, it is God's power that supports it. He has made all things that are, and He upholds them with the word of His power.

9. *He will keep the feet of His saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness.* What an awful picture that is of the doom of the wicked, "Silent in darkness." We read of the one, in the parable of our Lord, who had not on the wedding garment, that he was speechless. And at the last the wicked will have nothing to say, nothing with which to excuse themselves, nothing with which to comfort themselves, and all around them will be—

"Darkness, death, and long despair."

Vanquished in their fight with God, conquered forever, "the wicked shall be silent in darkness." I hardly know of a more dreadful picture than that of a spirit sitting amidst the clammy damps of the thick darkness of desolation, forever silent.

9, 10. *For by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces, out of Heaven shall He thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and He shall give strength unto His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed.* That is the song of this happy woman—and if we read the last three verses of Psalm 113, we shall see that the writer seems to have studied Hannah's song and to have molded his Psalm upon it—"He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill, that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people. He make the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise you the Lord." Now let us read Mary's Song in the 1st Chapter of the Gospel according to Luke. You remember, dear Friends, how the Lord Jesus said,

“I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” The Savior’s heart found a sacred satisfaction in the execution of His Father’s Sovereign Will in revealing to babes what He had hid from the wise and prudent! And it is remarkable that both Hannah and Mary sang upon that very theme which made the heart of the Savior leap for joy. We might have expected to find an abundance of affection in a woman’s song rather than a depth of Doctrine, but both Hannah and Mary make the Sovereignty of God the strain of their songs.

Luke 1:46, 47. *And Mary said, my soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.* [See Sermons #606, Volume 10—MARY’S SONG; #1514, Volume 26—THE KEYNOTE OF A CHOICE SONNET; #2219, Volume 37—A HARP OF TEN STRINGS and #2941, Volume 51—MARY’S MAGNIFICAT—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The burden of Mary’s Magnificat is very similar to Hannah’s song, though there was one respect in which she could raise an even loftier note, for she had been chosen to be the mother of our Lord!

48-55. *For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty has done to me great things; and holy is His name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. He has showed strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent empty away* [See Sermon #2582, Volume 44—ALTO AND BASS and Sermon #3019, Volume 52—THE HUNGRY FILLED, THE RICH EMPTIED—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spoke to our father, to Abraham, and to His seed forever.* You see that the theme of the song is the same all through—the casting down of the proud and the mighty—and the uplifting of those that are bowed down and despised! And all this is ascribed to the Sovereignty of God.

—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.**

“SPEAK, LORD!”

NO. 2526

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 18, 1897.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 20, 1884.**

***“Then Samuel answered, Speak; for Your servant hears.”
1 Samuel 3:10.***

The child Samuel was favored above all the family in which he dwelt. The Lord did not speak by night to Eli, or to any of Eli’s sons. In all that house, in all the rows of rooms that were round about the Tabernacle where the Ark of the Lord was kept, there was not one except Samuel to whom Jehovah spoke! The fact that the Lord should choose a child out of all that household and that He should speak to him, ought to be very encouraging to you who think yourself to be the least likely to be recognized by God. Are you so young? Yet, probably, you are not younger than Samuel was at this time. Do you seem to be very insignificant? Yet you can hardly be more so than was this child of Hannah’s love! Have you many troubles? Yet you have not more, I daresay, than rested on young Samuel, for it must have been very hard for him, while so young a child, to part from his dear mother, to be so soon sent away from his father’s house and so early made to do a servant’s work, even though it was in the House of the Lord!

I have noticed how often God looks with eyes of special love upon those in a family who seem least likely to be so regarded. It was on Joseph, whom his brothers hated—it was upon the crown of the head of him who was separated from his brothers—that God’s electing love descended! Why should it not come upon you? Perhaps, in the house where you live, you seem to be a stranger. Your foes are they of your own household! You have many sorrows and you think that waters of a full cup are wrung out to you, yet the Lord may have a very special regard for you. I invite you to hope that it is so, yes, and to come to Christ and put your soul’s trust in Him—and then I am persuaded that you will find that it is so and you will have to say—“He drew me to Him with cords of a man, with bands of love. Because He loved me with everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness has He drawn me.”

Notice, also, that while God had a very special regard for young Samuel, He had, in that regard, designs concerning the rest of the family. God’s elect are chosen not merely for their own sake—they are chosen for God’s name’s sake—and they are also chosen for the sake of mankind in general. The Jews were chosen that they might preserve the oracles of God for all the ages and that they might keep alight the spark of Divine Truth that we Gentiles might afterwards see its brightness. And when God’s special love is fixed upon one member of a family, I take it that

that one ought to say to himself or herself, “Am I not called that I may be a blessing in this family?” Young Samuel was to be God’s voice to Eli. He was chosen to that end and in a much more pleasant way than Samuel was, I trust that you, dear Friend, favored of God, are intended to be a messenger of better tidings than Samuel had to carry—perhaps to an aged father whose eyes are growing dim. Perhaps to some wayward brother wandering in the world. Perhaps to some sister whose heart is careless about Divine things. I think the first instinct of one who has been, himself, called by Grace, is to go and call others.

When Christ appears to Mary, Mary runs to the disciples to tell them that the Lord has spoken to her. Samuel is chosen that he may carry the message to Eli—and let each Believer feel that he is favored of God that he may take a blessing to others—“for none of us lives to himself and no man dies to himself.” I trust that we are not like the Dead Sea which perpetually drinks in Jordan’s streams, but never gives the waters out and, therefore, it becomes saltier and yet more saltier—the lake of death. We are not to be receivers only, taking in the good that God sends by this means or by that, but we are to pour out as fast as He pours in, working out that which God works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Our subject is to be, God speaking with us. And I trust that everyone here who has any fear of God at all will take the prayer of Samuel and make it his or her own—“Speak; for Your servant hears.”

I. And, first, I will speak to you upon the soul desiring—desiring to be spoken to by God. “Speak, Lord.”

Oh, how often has our heart felt this desire in the form of a groaning that cannot be uttered! “Lord, I want to know You! You are behind a veil and I cannot come to You. I know that You are, for I see Your works, but, oh, that I could get some token from Yourself, if not for my eyesight, yet at least for my heart!” We cannot endure a dumb God. It is a very dreadful thing to have a dumb friend—a very painful thing to have a wife who never spoke with you or a husband who could never exchange a word with you, or a father or mother from whom you could never hear a single word of love—and the heart cannot bear to have a dumb God, it needs Him to speak!

For what reason does the soul desire God to speak to it? Well, first, it desires thus to be *recognized by God*. It seems to say, “Speak, Lord, just to give me a token of recognition, that I may know that I am not overlooked, that I am not flung away like a useless thing upon the world’s dust heap, that I am not left to wander like a waif and stray, derelict, upon the ocean. Oh, that I may be sure that You see me, that You have some thoughts of love concerning me! How precious are Your thoughts to me, O God! If I do not know that You think of me, I pine, I die! Speak, Lord, just to show that You notice me. I am not worthy that You should regard me, but still speak to me, Lord, that I may know that You do observe me.”

More than that, this desire of the soul is a longing *to be called* by God. When the Lord said to the child, “Samuel, Samuel,” it was a distinct, personal call, like that which came to Mary. “The Master is come, and calls for you,” or that which came to another Mary when the Lord said to her,

“Mary,” and she turned and said, “Rabboni,” that is to say, “my dear Master.” All who have heard the Gospel preached have been called to some extent. The Word of God calls every sinner to repent and trust the Savior, but that call brings nobody to Christ unless it is accompanied by the special effectual call of the Holy Spirit. When that call is heard in the heart, then the heart responds! The general call of the Gospel is like the common “cluck” of the hen which she is always giving when her chickens are around her. But if there is any danger impending, then she gives a very peculiar call—quite different from the ordinary one—and the little chicks come running as fast as ever they can and hide for safety under her wings! That is the call we need—God’s peculiar and effectual call to His own! And I would, if I could, put into the heart and mouth of each person now present this prayer, “Speak, Lord, speak to *me*. Call *me*. When You are calling this one and that, Lord, call *me* with the effectual call of Your Holy Spirit! Be pleased so to call me that, when I hear You saying, ‘Seek you My face,’ my heart may say unto You, ‘Your face, Lord, will I seek.’”

“Speak, Lord, moreover, *that I may be instructed.*” I am afraid that there are some persons who do not want to be instructed in the things of God. They are afraid of knowing too much. I know some good Christian people—good in their way—who cautiously avoid portions of Scripture that are contrary to their creed. And I know a good many more who, when they get hold of a text, stretch it a little, or squeeze it a little, to make it fit in with what they, by *prejudice*, think *ought* to be the Truth of God! But that should not be your method or mine. Let us say, “Speak, Lord, and say to me what You will. Whatever You have to say to me, Master, say on.” The Lord Jesus may perhaps reply to us, “I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” Howbeit, it is for us to ask Him to lead us into all Truths of God. If there is a Truth that quarrels with you, depend upon it, there is something in *you* to quarrel with! You cannot alter the Truth of God—the simplest thing is to alter yourself! It is not for us to shorten the measure, but to endeavor to come up to it. Let us lay our hearts before God and pray Him to write His Truth upon them. Let us yield our understanding and every faculty that we have to the supreme sway of Jesus and, like Mary, sit down at His feet and receive His gracious Words. “Speak, Lord, to instruct me. Tell me all about this and that Truth which it is necessary for me to know.”

We sometimes mean by this expression, “Speak, Lord, *for our guidance.*” We have got into a great difficulty. We really do not know which way the road leads—to the right or to the left—and we may go blundering on and have to come all the way back again! So we especially need the Lord to speak to us for our guidance. It is an admirable plan to do nothing without prayer—neither to begin, nor continue, nor close anything except under Divine guidance and direction. “Speak, Lord. Give me any answer. If not by Urim and Thummim, yet by such means as You are pleased to use in these modern times. Speak, Lord, for whether You point me to the right or to the left, I will go whichever way You bid me go. Only let me hear Your voice behind me, saying, ‘This is the way: walk you in it.’”

At times, also, we need the Lord’s voice *for our comfort*. When the heart is very heavy, there is no comfort for it except from the mouth of Christ by the Holy Spirit. You may hear the sweetest discourse, you may read the most precious chapters of Scripture and yet your grief may not be relieved, even in the least degree! But when the Lord Jesus Christ undertakes to speak to you. When the great Father opens His mouth. When the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, applies the Truth of God to your heart, then are you filled with joy!

I do not know what particular state you may be in, but this prayer of little Samuel can be turned all sorts of ways. Are you doubtful about your interest in Christ? A great many people make fun of that verse—

**“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?”**

If they ever find themselves where some of us have been, they will not do so any more! I believe it is a shallow experience that makes people always confident of what they are and where they are, for there are times of terrible trouble that make even the most confident child of God hardly know whether he is on his head or on his heels! It is the mariner who has done business on great waters who, in times of unusual stress and storm, reels to and fro and staggers like a drunken man—and is at his wits’ end. At such a time, if Jesus whispers that I am His, then the question is answered once and for all—and the soul has received a token which it waves in the face of Satan so that he disappears—and the soul goes on its way rejoicing!

Do pray this prayer—“Speak, Lord.” If *you* will not, it shall always be *my* prayer. I would seek the Presence of my God and cry, “As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God! When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say to me, Where is your God?” But when my heart can answer, “Here He is! He is with me,” then does my soul begin to sing at once—

**“My God, the spring of all my joys,
The life of my delights,
The glory of my brightest days,
And comfort of my nights.”**

Use the prayer of Samuel at this moment, even if you are rejoicing. And if you are beginning to wander, if you are getting heavy and dull and lukewarm, ask the Lord to speak to you so that you may be quickened out of that state, that your declining may be stopped. “Speak, Lord.” I have known the time—and so have some of you—when one Word of His has saved us from a grievous fall. A text of Scripture has stopped us when our feet had almost slipped. A precious thought has helped us when we were ready to despair and when we could not tell what to do. One Word out of the Inspired Book applied to the soul by the Holy Spirit has made a plain path before us and we have been delivered from all our difficulties! I commend to you, then, very earnestly, the personal prayer of the soul desiring—“Speak, Lord.”

II. Now, secondly, let us think of THE LORD SPEAKING.

Suppose that the Lord does speak to us? Just think for a minute what it is. First, it is a high honor. Oh, to have a Word from God! There cannot be any honor that comes from man that can, for a moment, be compared with having an audience with God, familiar conversation with the Infinite, sitting down at the feet of Eternal Love and listening to the voice of Infallible Wisdom! The peers of the realm are not so honored when they see their Queen as you are when you see your God and He speaks with you. To be permitted to speak with Him is a delight, but to hear Him speak with us is Heaven begun below!

And while it is so great an honor, we are bound to remember that it is a very solemn responsibility. If any man here can say, “The Lord once spoke with me,” my Brother, you are under perpetual bonds of obligation to Him! Jesus Christ spoke to Saul of Tarsus out of Heaven and from that hour Paul felt himself to be the Lord’s, a consecrated man, to live and die for Him who had spoken to him. “Speak, Lord,” and when You do speak, help us to feel the condescension of Your love and yield ourselves up wholly to You because You have spoken to us.

“Oh!” says one, “if God were to speak to me, I am sure it would make a change in me of a very wonderful kind.” It would, my Friend. It would convert you. It would turn you right around and start you in quite a new direction. Someone said to me, concerning Paul, that he had “a twist” at that time when he was going to Damascus and everybody afterwards asked, “Is that Saul of Tarsus, the philosopher, the clever young Rabbi, the learned pupil of Gamaliel? Why, there he is, talking plainly and simply to those poor people and trying to bring them to Christ, the very Christ whom he used to hate! What has made such a change in him?” “Oh!” they said, “he has had a strange twist! Something has happened to him which has quite altered him.” Oh that the Lord would make something of the same kind happen to everyone here to whom it has not yet happened! This is the mainspring of a holy life, “God has spoken to me and I cannot live as I used to live.” This is the spur of an impetuous zeal, “Jesus Christ has spoken to me and I must run with diligence upon His errands.” This, I believe, comes like fire-flakes upon the spirit and sets the whole nature on a blaze. To hear God speak, to have His voice go through and through the soul involves a great responsibility, yet he who truly feels it will never wish to shirk it.

To hear God speak to us will bring to us many a hazy memory. I appeal to those who have heard that Voice before. do you not remember, dear Friends, many places where the Lord spoke to you? You have forgotten many of the sermons which you have heard, but there is one sermon you have never forgotten—perhaps there are a dozen that you can recall if you think a little. Why do you remember them? Why, because you were in great trouble and you went into the House of Prayer and the sermon seemed made on purpose for you! You said to the person who sat with you, “I am glad that I was here, for I am sure that from the opening sentence to the close, it was all for me.” Or else you were getting into a very dull and stupid state and you went to the House of God and there was a sermon which cut you to the very quick and woke you up. You never could go back to where you were before God spoke to you. No, we can

never forget these voices—sweet yet strong—which thrill our very soul, which wind not through the ear and so waste half their strength, but come directly to the heart! And in the heart enshrine themselves! Oh, yes, if God has spoken to you, your heart will dance at the memory of the many times in which He has done so!

I think I must also say that it is *a probable mercy* that God will speak to you. I know that if you are a father, it is not improbable that you will speak to your child. And our Heavenly Father will speak to His children. And the Lord Jesus Christ, who is married to us, surely will not be a silent Husband, but will be willing to speak to us and to reveal His heart to us. Only pray just now, “Speak, Lord! Speak, Lord!” and He will speak. I feel encouraged to expect that He who died for me, will speak to me. He who did not hesitate to reveal Himself in human flesh, bearing our infirmities and sorrows, surely will not hide Himself from His own flesh! He will not be here among us according to His promise, “Lo, I am with you always,” and yet never speak to us at all! Oh, no! He waits to be gracious! Therefore, let not our prayers be restrained, but let us cry, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.”

“But how does the Lord speak?” someone asks. That is a very important question. I know that He has many ways of speaking to the hearts of His people. We do not expect to hear *audible* words. It is not by sense that we live—not even by the sense of hearing—but by *faith*. We believe and so we apprehend God.

God often speaks to His children *through His works*. Are there not days when the mountains and the hills break forth before us into singing and the trees of the field clap their hands because God is speaking by them? Do you not lift up your eyes to the heavens at night and watch the stars and seem to hear God speaking to you in the solemn silence? That man who never hears God speak through His works is, I think, hardly in a healthy state of mind. Why, the very beauty of spring with its promise, the fullness of summer, the ripeness of autumn and even the chilly blasts of winter are all vocal if we have but ears to hear what they say!

God also speaks to His children very loudly by *His Providence*. Is there no voice in affliction? Has pain no tongue? Has the bed of languishing no eloquence? The Lord speaks to us, sometimes, by bereavement—when one after another has been taken away, God has spoken to us. The deaths of others are for our spiritual life—sharp medicine for our soul’s health. God has spoken to many a mother by the dear babe she has had to lay in the grave. And many a man has, for the first time, listened to God’s voice when he has heard the passing bell that spoke of the departure of one dearer to him than life itself. God speaks to us, if we will but hear, in all the arrangements of Providence both pleasant and painful. Whether He caresses or chastises, there is a voice in all that He does. Oh, that we were not so deaf!

But the Lord speaks to us chiefly *through His Word*. Oh, what converse God has with His people when they are quietly reading their Bibles! There, in your still room, as you have been reading a chapter, have you not felt as if God spoke those words straight to your heart then and there? Has not Christ Himself said to you, while you have been reading

His Word, “Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me”? The text does not seem to be like an old letter in a book, rather is it like a fresh speech, newly spoken from the mouth of the Lord to you. It has been so, dear Friends, has it not?

Then there is His Word as it is preached. It is delightful to notice how God speaks to the heart while the sermon is being heard—yes, and when the sermon is being read. I am almost, every day, made to sing inwardly as I hear of those to whom I have been the messenger of God. And my Lord has many messengers and He is speaking by them all. There was one man, who had lived a life of drunkenness and impurity, and had even shed human blood with his bowie knife or his revolver, yet he found the Savior and became a new man! And when he died, he charged one who was with him to tell me that my sermon had brought him to Christ! “I shall never tell him on earth,” he said, “but I shall tell the Lord Jesus Christ about him when I get to Heaven.” It was by a sermon, read far away in the backwoods, that this great sinner was brought to Christ! But it is not only in the backwoods that the Lord blesses the preached Word, it is here, it is everywhere where Christ is proclaimed! If we preach the Gospel, God gives a voice to it and speaks through it. There is a kind of incarnation of the Spirit of God in every true preacher—God speaks through him. Oh, that men had but ears to hear! But, alas, alas, too often they hear as if it were of no importance! And the Lord has to say to His servant as He said to Ezekiel, “Lo, you are unto them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear your words, but they do them not.” Oh, that each one of our hearers always came up to the sanctuary with this prayer in his heart, and on his lips, “Speak, Lord, by Your servant; speak right down into my soul.”

But the Lord has a way of sometimes speaking to the heart *by His Spirit*—I think not usually apart from His Word—but yet there are feelings and emotions, tenderness and trembling, joys and delights which we cannot quite link with any special portion of Scripture laid home to the heart, but which seem to steal upon us unawares by the direct operation of the Spirit of God upon the heart. You who know the Lord must sometimes have felt a strange delight which had no earthly origin. You have, perhaps, awakened in the morning with it, and it has remained with you. A little while after, you have had some severe trial, and you realize that the Lord had spoken to you to strengthen you to bear the affliction! At other times you have felt great tenderness about some one individual and you have felt constrained to pray, and perhaps to go for some miles to speak a word to that individual. And it turned out that God meant to save that person through you and He did! I think we are not half as mindful as we ought to be of the secret working of the Holy Spirit upon the mind.

There are certain fanatics who get delirious and dream that they are prophets, and I know not what. But we just put them to the side. This is a very different thing from being guided by the Spirit of God in all the actions of life so as to obey the will of the Lord, sometimes, in cases where we might not have known it to be His will, or might have omitted it.

Whenever you feel moved to do anything that is good, do it! Do it even without being moved, because it is your duty, for, “to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin.” But, above all, when there comes a gracious influence on the conscience—a gentle reminder to the heart—quickly and speedily do as the Spirit prompts, taking note within your heart that the Lord has laid this particular burden upon you and you must not cast it from you.

I would like to imitate one dear man of God with whom I sometimes commune. On one occasion he seemed to feel in his soul that he must go to a little port in France to deliver the Lord’s message. And as the boat went in, a person on the deck spoke to him and he said, “You are the one to whom I was sent.” Within a month that godly man was in Russia, seeking the souls of others of whom he knew nothing! But God had guided him and they were brought to the Savior’s feet. I know him as one who, I believe, lives so near to God that the Lord speaks to him in other ways than He does to the most of men, for all Christians are not, alike, favored in this respect. One may be a child of God, like Eli, and yet so live that God will not speak with Him. And, on the other hand, one may be a child like Samuel—obedient, beautiful in character and watchful to know God’s will, praying, “Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears”—and then God will speak to you. It is not to all that He speaks, but He would speak to all if they were ready to learn what He had to say.

III. Now I must close with just a few words upon the last part of my subject, which is THE SOUL HEARING. We have had the soul desiring and the Lord speaking—now for the soul hearing. “Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears.”

And, first, I think we have, here, an argument. “Lord, do speak, for I do hear.” “There are none so deaf as those that will not hear,” so I fear that some people are very deaf, indeed. But, oh, when you feel, “Only let the Lord speak, I will hear; only let Him come to me and I will set the door wide open for Him to enter, glad if He, my gracious God, will come and be a sojourner with me”—He will come, He will speak to you! It is a good argument and you may use it if you can. God help you to do so!

Yet it appears to be an *inference* as well as an argument, for it seems to run like this, “Lord, if You speak, of course Your servant hears.” Shall God speak and His servant not hear? God forbid! Strangers and sojourners may not listen, but His servant will. “Speak, Lord; for if You will but speak, I must hear. There is such a force about Your voice, such wisdom about what You say, that hear You I must and will.” It is an argument from God speaking, but it is also an inference from God speaking.

“Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears,” seems also to contain a *promise* within it, namely, that if the Lord will but speak, we will hear. I am afraid that sometimes we really do not listen to God. Suppose that we pray the Lord to speak to us and when we have done praying we go away and engage in worldly conversation? This is surely not acting consistently. I remember being asked to see a person and I thought that he wanted to learn something from me. But when I saw him for three-quarters of an hour, he spoke the whole time, and afterwards he told a friend that I was a most delightful person to converse with! When I was

told that, I said, “Oh, yes, that was because I did not interrupt the man! He was wound up and I let him run down.”

But conversation means two people talking, does it not? It cannot be a conversation if I do all the talking, or if my friend does it all. So, in conversing with God, there must be, as we say, turn and turn about. You speak with God and then sit still—and let God speak with you. And, if He does not at once speak to your heart, open His Book and read a few verses and let Him speak to you that way. Some people cannot pray when they wish to do so. I remember George Muller sweetly saying, “When you come to your time for devotion, if you cannot pray, do not try. If you cannot speak with God, do not try. Let God speak with you. Open your Bible and read a passage.” Sometimes, when you meet a friend, you cannot begin a conversation. Well then, let your friend begin it. Then you can reply to him and the conversation will go on merrily enough. So, if you cannot speak to God, let God speak to you.

It is also true communion with the Lord, sometimes, just to sit still, look up and say nothing. But just, “in solemn silence of the mind,” find your Heaven and your God. “Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears. I have prayed to You, I have told You my grief and now I am just sitting still to hear if You have anything to say to me. I am all ears and all heart. If You will command me, I will obey. If You will comfort me, I will believe. If You will reprove me, I will meekly bow my head. If You will give me the assurance of Your love, my heart shall dance at every sound of Your voice. Only speak, Lord; for Your servant hears.”

I have finished my discourse, but I do wish that some poor sinner here would say, before he goes away, “Lord, speak to me! Speak to my soul. Let this be the last night of my spiritual death and the birth-night of my spiritual life.” As for you who love the Lord, I am sure that you will pray this prayer and that you will keep on praying, “Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears.” And then what blessed conversations there will be between you and your Father in Heaven! The Lord bless you all, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON! 1 SAMUEL 3

Verse 1. *And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli.* Samuel was but a child, yet he was a faithful servant of God up to the light he had received. The grown-up sons of Eli were rebelling against God, but “the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord.” It is a great aggravation of sin for ungodly men to persist in it when even little children rebuke them by their careful walk and conversation. It made the sin of Eli’s sons all the worse because “the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli”

1. *And the Word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision.* God spoke with very few and His speech to them was private. “There was no open vision.” What was spoken was very rich and rare, but there was little of it. The Lord, in anger at the sin of Eli’s sons, took away the spirit of prophecy from the land.

2. *And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see.* He was a good old man, but he was almost worn out and he had been unfaithful to God in not keeping his family right. He must have found some comfort in having such a sweet and dear companion and servant as little Samuel was.

3-5. *And before the lamp of God went out in the Temple of the Lord, where the Ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; that the LORD called Samuel and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for you called me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.* Servants and children are to be attentive and obedient to the calls they hear, but masters must also be gentle, kind and considerate to them. Eli did not call the child a fool, or speak harshly to him. He knew that Samuel had a good intention and even if he had been mistaken and no one had called him, yet it was a good thing on the part of the child to act as if he had been spoken to. And Eli quietly and gently said, "I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down."

6. *And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for you did call me.* He felt sure of it, confident that he had not been mistaken.

6, 7. *And he answered, I called not, my son, lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord.* There was the beginning of the work of Grace in his heart. He was well-intentioned, but, as yet, God had not revealed Himself to him. "Samuel did not yet know the Lord"

7, 8. *Neither was the Word of the Lord yet revealed unto him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time.* We do not blame Samuel, for he was but a child, and spiritual understanding had not yet fully come to him. But what shall I say of some to whom God has spoken for years till their hair is gray—and yet they have not understood the voice of the Lord even to this hour? I pray God that He may call them yet again! The Lord did not disdain to call Samuel four times, for when He means effectually to call, if one call is not sufficient, He will call again and again and again! "The Lord called Samuel again the third time."

8, 9. *And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for you did call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if He calls you, that you shall say, Speak, LORD; for Your servant hears. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.* It was a chastisement to Eli that God did not speak directly to *him*, but sent him a message by another. And it must have been very humiliating to the aged man of God that God should select a little child to be His messenger to him. Yet, as Eli had not been faithful, it was great mercy on God's part to speak to him at all! And, no doubt the old man did not resent the fact that God, instead of speaking to one of his sons, or to himself, spoke by this little child. Eli loved Samuel and, finding that the Lord intended to use this child, he did not grow jealous and angry and begin to dampen the child's spirit—he gave him wise directions how to act in case God should speak to him again.

10. *And the Lord came, and stood.*—From which we learn that there was some kind of appearance to Samuel such as that which was mani-

fested to others. Some spiritual Being was before him, though he could not make out the form thereof—“Jehovah came, and stood.”

10. *And called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel.* This time the child’s name was spoken twice, as though God would say to him, “I have called you by your name—you are Mine! It was no doubt to make a deeper impression upon the child’s mind that his name was twice called by the Lord.

10. *Then Samuel answered, Speak; for Your servant hears.* You observe that he did not say, “Lord.” Perhaps he hardly dared to take that sacred name upon his lips. He was impressed with such solemn awe at the name of God that he said, “Speak; for Your servant hears.” I wish that some Christian men of my acquaintance would leave out the Lord’s name a little in their prayers, for we may take the name of the Lord in vain even in our supplications! When the heathen are addressing their gods, they are accustomed to repeat their names over and over again. “O Baal, hear us! O Baal, hear us!” Or, as the Hindu say when they cry, “Ram! Ram! Ram! Ram!” repeating the name of their god. But as for us, when we think of the infinitely-glorious One, we dare not needlessly repeat His name.

11-13. *And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of everyone that hears it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house. When I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows.* What a striking expression—“the iniquity which he knows.” There is a good deal of iniquity about us which we do *not* know—that is a sin of ignorance. But deep down in his heart Eli knew that he had been afraid to speak to his sons about their sins and that when he had spoken, it had been in such lenient terms that they made light of them. Possibly he had never chastened them when they were young, and he had not spoken to them sharply when they were older. Remember that he was a judge—he was a High Priest and he ought not to have allowed his sons to remain priests at all if they were behaving themselves filthily at the door of the Tabernacle. He ought to have dealt with them as he would have dealt with anybody else, but he did not. So God said, “I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows.”

13. *Because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.* A man said to me, one day, “I never laid my hand upon my children,” and I answered, “Then I think it is very likely that God will lay His hand upon you.” “Oh,” he said, “I have not even spoken sharply to them.” “Then,” I replied, “it is highly probable that God will speak very sharply to you, for it is not God’s will that parents should leave their children unrestrained in their sin.”

14, 15. *And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever. And Samuel lay until the morning.* I wonder whether he went to sleep? I should think not. After such visitation and revelation, it is a marvel that the child could lie still! One wonders that he did not go at once to Eli, but

then the message was so heavy that he could not be in a hurry to deliver it. “And Samuel lay until the morning.”

15. *And opened the doors of the House of the Lord.* Dear child! There are some of us who, if God had spoken to us as He had spoken to Samuel, would feel a deal too big to go and open doors any more! If God were to come and speak to some who are poor, they would run away from their trade. If God were to speak to some who are young, they would give themselves mighty Sirs! But Samuel meekly accepted the high honor God had conferred upon him and when he rose in the morning, he went about his usual duties. “He opened the doors of the house of the Lord.”

15. *And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision.* The old man must have felt that it was nothing very pleasant. Still, he wanted to know the Lord’s messages. I hope he was in such a frame of mind that he could say, “Lord, show me the worst of my case! Let me know all Your mind about it and let me not go on with my eyes bandaged in ignorance of Your will concerning me.”

16-18. *Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I. And he said, What is the thing that the LORD has said unto you? I pray you hide it not from me! God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the things that He said to you. And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him.* Samuel was obeying the Divine command which had not, then, been given—“He that has My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully.”

18. *And Eli said, It is the LORD: let Him do what seems Him good.* This was a grand speech of old Eli. Terrible as it might be, he bowed his head to the Divine sentence and acknowledged that it was just.

19-21. *And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of His Words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a Prophet of the Lord. And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh; for the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the Word of the LORD.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—711, 766, 192. (PART I)

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

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

A PRIVATE ENQUIRY NO. 2184

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 18, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 9, 1890.**

***“What is the thing that the Lord has said unto you?”
1 Samuel 3:17.***

THE Lord would not speak directly to Eli, although he was the High Priest. In ordinary circumstances it would have been so, but Eli had grieved the Lord, and thus had lost his honorable standing. God had not cast him off, but He viewed him with such displeasure that He would only speak to him through another person—even as great kings, if they are offended with their courtiers—send them messages by other hands. The Lord sent, first, a man of God to warn Eli of what would be the sure result of his lack of firmness with his sons. And when He gave him a second warning, it was sent through one who was a little underling in his family.

O you saints who live upon familiar terms with the Lord, take heed of sin, lest you lose your close communion, your favored fellowship and stand in a second place! God will speak to you, but it will be in warning and in a roundabout way—not face to face, with His lips to your ear, as He has been known to do while you have pleased Him. God will not cast you off, but He may set you aside for a time. You may still hear His message through others, but He will be silent to you, personally. You may have to live in the frigid zone of doubt and anxiety, instead of sunning yourselves in the full blaze of Divine Love. It was so with Eli—he had forborne to rebuke sin in his own house—and had brought the anger of God upon himself! And, therefore, he had no comfortable union and no honor with Jehovah, but must be schooled by a child.

Further, when God had sent a man of God to Eli and the message did not awaken him to a sense of his sin in over-indulgence of his sons and toleration of evil in those under him, the Lord sends him a threatening word by a child, for God has many messengers. The sending of the child, Samuel, to bear the terrible tidings to the aged priest was a sweet but stern rebuke of Eli. The child is awake, while the old man is locked in the slumber which comes of a seared conscience. Experience must now be admonished by childhood and wisdom by simplicity! Gray hairs, in this case, yield not a crown of glory to the erring ruler, but he must bow his head in sorrow at a rebuke brought to him by a lowly boy. The child is evidently more trusted by God than the venerable priest! It was the beginning of the Divine chastisement that his honor should pass away and an aged priest should stand reproved by a youthful Prophet. There was much

mercy in it, yet we clearly see the Lord stripping His servant of his decorations and setting him in a lower place—making the Urim and the Thummim which he wore upon his breast to be of secondary power for showing the future, while the Spirit rested more fully on a holy boy.

He, whose talk was still that of childhood, becomes a mouth for God, while the venerable ruler of his people has nothing to say but to submit to his inevitable punishment! Eli was a man of God and, notwithstanding his great chastisement and his mournful death, I doubt not that he died in the Lord. But he brought dishonor on his own name and he was condemned to know that his holy office would not be continued in his line—that none of his descendants should live to old age. He had not duly honored the Lord and, therefore, he heard the sentence pronounced on him and on his race. “They that honor Me, I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.” He had spared the rod of rebuke and, therefore, the axe of judgment fell on his house, “because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.” O Brothers and Sisters, let us beware of sin—of allowing sin in those under our charge—lest the Lord lay us low and send an affliction upon us, which shall cleave to our race forever!

We will now use Eli’s question, by which he extracted from Samuel the message of God, and we will view it in three lights. First, as put *to Samuel*. Secondly, as coming *from Eli*. And, thirdly, as capable of being turned *upon ourselves*. We will ask it of ourselves, as another might ask it. And we will answer it to our own hearts, so that we may, by a rehearsal, become ready to give an answer to him that shall ask us in days to come. Come, my heart, answer to yourself, “What is the thing that the Lord has said to you?” May the Holy Spirit help you by bringing all things to your remembrance, whatever He has said to you!

I. First, let us view this question as addressed TO SAMUEL.

The first remark which we shall make upon it is that God does speak to men. Otherwise this would be a senseless question—“What is the thing that the Lord has said unto you?” God does communicate with mortals. He is not shut up all alone by Himself in sublime solitude. He has not placed His creatures at an immeasurable distance, with an impassable abyss between their littleness and His own grandeur. It is not true that He cannot hear their cries, nor respond to them in tones of love. In ways suitable to their feeble nature, the Lord has spoken to men.

He has done so *in the Inspired volume of His sacred Word*. Every line in this priceless volume was dictated by the Spirit and is a message from God to men. This Book is to be read as the record of Jehovah’s voice. It is the phonograph of our Father’s speech in days gone by. What He has spoken aforetime by His voice, He continues to speak to us by His written Word. He spoke through Prophets and Seers, Evangelists and Apostles—and here we have it—even all that is of abiding significance to us upon whom the ends of the world are come.

God, in a renewed manner, speaks to us *by His Word when His Spirit applies it to us individually*. We never truly hear the voice of God in Scripture until the Truth of God is spoken home to each heart and conscience

by the *Holy Spirit*. Revelation must be revealed to each one, otherwise it soon comes to be a veiling of the Truth, rather than a discovering of the Lord's mind. The Revelation is clear enough in itself, but we have not the opened eyes till Divine Grace bestows it. If we have not the Spirit of God, the letter may actually become a veil to hide the spirit of Truth. This, indeed, it should not be, neither is it according to its natural intent and tendency—but our depravity makes it so, turning even the Light of God, itself, into a thing which blinds. Do you know what it is to have a text leap out of the Scriptures upon you and carry you away? This special energy and flash of Truth is always memorable. How often have the waves of this sea of Truth been phosphorescent before my eyes—a sea of glass mingled with fire—of which the spray has dashed over me and set my soul on fire! As surely as the Lord spoke these words to Moses, or to David, or to Isaiah, or to John, or to Paul, so surely does He speak them to our souls by His Spirit. Do you understand what I say?

Moreover, our God has ways of communicating His mind to His children *by those of His servants who speak in His name*. He directs the thoughts of His ministers and suggests their words so that they speak to the cases of those who are led to hear the Word of God.

By our own thoughts, also, the Lord communes with us. If we will be still before Him, He will prepare our hearts and in silence we shall hear His voice. It would be a strange thing if God could not and did not communicate with His own children. And it is still more strange and sad that, though He does speak, His people are slow of heart and dull of hearing.

Our God also speaks to us *in Providence*. In choice favors we hear His soft and tender tones. In chastisement and rebukes we hear the sterner notes. But every sound is full of love. The Lord has ways of taking His children apart and speaking to them upon their beds. In the wilderness He speaks to the heart. He can talk with us *in Nature*. Have you not heard Him in the thunder? In the roaring of the sea? Yes, we hear Him, not only in the dash of Niagara, but in the ripple of the brook and the smiling of a primrose on its bank! The Lord is never voiceless except to the earless soul. He speaks—let us hear.

Here we make a further remark—God regards not age in His speaking, but He condescends to speak with young children. Samuel was the Lord's in his long clothes and served the Lord while a boy—and the Lord did not disdain to come to his little cot at night and call him by his name. We often talk as if it could not be possible that the Lord should speak with boys and girls and yet, my Brothers and Sisters, there is not much more of a stoop in God's talking with a child than in His speaking to a man! Indeed, the man has more of sin and thus he is often farther off from God than the child. If the children here present are, by God's Grace, made willing to hear God's voice—if they are obedient to the Lord and have open hearts and attentive minds towards His Word—the great God will not pass them by! The Lord stoops to the lowliness of a child and smiles at its simplicity. If young people are prayerful, thoughtful, reverent, believing and obedient, the fact that, like Samuel, they are small in stature and young in years,

shall be no detriment to them! The Lord will speak and call them by their names.

My observation leads me to believe that many children have heard more of God than persons who are grown up. They may not find willing ears to hear what the Lord has said to them, but if they did, they could tell us marvelous things. Some of us remember how, in our own childhood, the Lord dealt wonderfully with us and there were “prophecies which went before” concerning us, whose meaning we can now read, though at the time we did not understand them. I think that young Samuel was one of the fittest persons in the world for the Lord to choose as His messenger. And so far from its being unusual for young ears to hear the voice from Heaven, I think they are the best prepared to do so. Four times the Lord said, “Samuel, Samuel,” and the child responded and said at last, when he knew who it was that called him, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.” Anyone here who can say from his heart, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears,” will not be long without a word from the Invisible! Oh, that our ears may be opened to heavenly tidings—may be awakened, morning by morning, by the voice of the Lord! May we often hear it as the morning song and the evening hymn! May the Lord also hear our voices in prayer and praise and meditation till our lives shall be a holy dialog between our souls and our God, never dying down into silence, but lasting on until we behold Him face to face!

Our next observation is that when we do hear the voice of God we should be deeply impressed by it. Young Samuel gave evidence that he deeply felt the responsibility of having heard the voice of God. We read that, “Samuel lay till morning”—he did not go to sleep, but he did not leave his bed. He laid still and *thought*. After hearing that terrible word which made his heart heavy and caused his ears to tingle, like a wise child, he lay still and pondered it in his soul. He did not rush in upon Eli, for the news was hard to tell. Neither did he seek out another confidant. He had been called to be the Lord’s Prophet. He was conscious of his commission and he became sober beyond his years. “He lay till morning.” What thoughts passed through his mind on his bed! He had been a child when he went to rest last night and now he had suddenly become a man with a dread secret entrusted to him!

A pressing anxiety was on him as to how he should speak to Eli—and a battle raged within his heart between a fear of grieving the good old man by the message—and the greater fear of grieving God by keeping any of it back. He remained still upon his bed, quietly meditating and turning over what he had heard, and thinking of what he should do. I would to God that, after every sermon, all my hearers, young and old, had a quarter of an hour alone! A night of wakeful thought over it would be still better. I am sure that what is needed with our religious reading is time for private thought. We put into the mill more than it grinds! Some people imagine that if they read so many chapters of the Bible every day, it will be much to their profit—but it is not so if the reading is a mere mechanical exercise. It will be far better to read a tenth as much and weigh it—and let it take possession of brain and heart. A little food cooked is better for dinner

than a great joint raw. A man who wants to see a country must not hurry through it by express train, but he must stop in the towns and villages and see what is to be seen. He will know more about the land and its people if he walks the highways, climbs the mountains, stays in the homes and visits the workshops, than if he does so many miles in the day and hurries through picture galleries as if death were pursuing him. Don't hurry through Scripture, but pause for the Lord to speak to you. Oh, for more meditation! Samuel, "lay till morning." Wise child that! With such work before him for his head and his heart, he did well to lie quiet, take a breath and collect his strength.

Next, the heavenly voice made such an impression on his mind that he feared to tell it to Eli. The message was so dreadful to him that he dreaded to repeat it to him whom it most concerned. When you and I know God's Word and hear God's voice in it, it will often strike us with a solemn awe which will quite overpower us. Jacob, when he saw the ladder and the angels, did not say in the morning, "How delightful was the vision! How happy was my dream!" That would have been like the language of shallow, superficial minds. But he said, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the House of God and this is the gate of Heaven." I know that God's Revelation of Himself to us is calculated to fill us with intense joy, but it is even more likely to cast us down upon our faces, prostrate before His Divine Majesty, in solemn awe of the Lord of Hosts. Remember how John put it. "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." He was the best beloved of the Lord and yet, at the sight of our glorious Well-Beloved, he had no life left in him, but he swooned at His feet! Marvel not that "the child Samuel feared"—and especially feared to tell Eli the vision. I say that when you and I hear the voice of the Lord our God, it will create in us deep emotions of fear, of joy and of holy reverence—and we shall know of a surety that it is no little thing to hear the Word of the Most High. We shall tremble at His Word, yet we shall rejoice to hear it!

I would say, next, that we should store up in our memories whatever God says to us. These are not things which we can safely allow to slip. What is written in this Book should be transferred to our memories. It is a good thing to learn passages of Scripture by heart, even as classical scholars treasure up the words of their favorite authors. It is a good thing to have texts of Scripture used from day to day to sweeten the breath and then laid by in the heart to perfume the character. A mind well stored with Biblical lore will be a great cheer to us, should we live, like Eli, till our eyes are dim and we cannot see to read. The Bible in the memory is better than the Bible in the bookcase. All that this child heard from the Lord, he kept in his memory, so that, when the time came, he could produce it, "every whit." And in later days could write it down in this, his history. Oh, that you and I were able to produce "every whit" of what God has spoken to us! Alas, too often the Word has come and it has gone—and it has left small trace behind. We have heard and we have forgotten. God grant that, after this, whenever we hear what God, the Lord, shall speak, we may mark, learn and inwardly digest the same! And then it will not depart from us, but will remain for our growth, strength and building up.

One more remark. Looking at the text in its light toward Samuel, we learn that we should be able to tell what we hear from God. We find Eli saying to Samuel, “What is the thing that the Lord has said unto you?” If God has spoken to us, somebody or other will need to know and will have a right to be informed. It may be that many whom we esteem will wish to know what God has spoken to us—so we must be prepared—even though it is with a measure of fear and trembling, to tell them the solemn tidings. What is whispered in our ears in the closet we may have to speak on the house-tops.

Samuel did this *very solemnly*, with a deep sense of its weight. Children are generally eager to tell a story, but they do not always consider what effect its repetition may produce. They are not able to keep a secret, but feel a pleasure in communicating what they know. But this child was now raised up by the Spirit of prophecy and became tender and thoughtful. And as it would cause Eli great anguish, he was very slow to speak. He did not open his mouth on the matter till he was commanded by Eli, and then he did it as a sacred duty. Young Christians should speak much of their Lord and His Gospel. God forbid that I should hinder them! But it will be well for them to speak, not because it is pleasant, but because they must. We must tell out the Divine Word because there is a woe upon us if we withhold it. We must not be flippant, but solemnly, under constraint. Much zeal is very natural, but very worthless, because its source is not Divine. That zeal which is kindled and sustained by a heavenly power which makes us feel that we must speak or the very stones would cry out against us—this zeal, I say, is of an effectual kind—and the more of it the better! If I only feel that I may, or may not, tell what I think I have heard from the Lord, the probability is that I had better be silent. The true prophetic Word is as fire in the bones—it *must* come out—and yet when it is spoken it is with lips which a live altar-coal has blistered.

Samuel did his work *very carefully and completely*. We read, “and Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him.” He said nothing more and nothing less than God had spoken. You know how difficult it is to repeat a story correctly. You may try it at your own table, with all the good people around it. Whisper a story into the ear of the next person to you and let it be repeated in the same fashion from one to another and, by the time it comes round the small circle, it will be quite a fresh affair! Additions and subtractions are weeds which are hard to keep out of the garden of conversation! Alas, this holds good even of the Word of the Lord—how many add to it or take from it! But the child Samuel repeated his story correctly because the fear of the Lord was upon him. When you do tell the Gospel, tell it correctly, for it is wonderfully easy to make another gospel of it—and the tendency to do so is very powerful in these days. How many are proclaiming a mutilated gospel and are not telling “every whit!” Some part of Revelation they think too high, or too dry or too orthodox, or too something or other—and so their overweening conceit induces them to leave it out. Oh, do not so, I pray you!

Samuel is to be commended that, when he had to tell Eli what God had spoken, he left out nothing. Tell out the Gospel, you ministers of Christ!

Give Christ His due! Give fair proportion to each Truth of God. Do not magnify one doctrine to the exclusion of another, but endeavor to paint the portrait of Revelation with every feature in its place and in due proportion to the rest. It is great wisdom to be able to repeat fully and faithfully what God has spoken to us. May the Holy Spirit aid us herein!

It was *a very painful duty* which the holy child was called upon to perform. Samuel loved his foster father and for him to mention the tremendous doom pronounced upon Eli's house must have caused him great grief of spirit. But he bravely repeated the dread words of the Most High. There are certain Truths in God's Word which we tremble to think upon. Do you dream that we have any pleasure in the doctrine of eternal punishment? We speak of the wrath to come and the everlasting punishment which God apportions to the impenitent with fear and trembling, but we speak of it because we cannot escape from the conviction that it is taught in the Word of God! As Samuel was compelled to tell Eli of the unalterable curse that God had pronounced upon his household, so must God's faithful servants, in the discharge of their duty, speak of the doom of the wicked and never flinch from warning them. O my Hearers, "he that believes not shall be damned," is as true as, "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." We must speak all the Gospel or else the blood of souls will stain our skirts at the Last Great Day. However painful a duty it may be, it is none the less binding upon us!

But then, in Samuel's case, it was *an obvious duty*. It must have been clear to the young Prophet that he *must* tell Eli what so much concerned him. This conclusion would be reached without much reasoning. If God had spoken to Samuel, it could only be that he might tell Eli. My Hearer, if the Lord has told you anything about eternal things, He has revealed it that you may pass it on. The Truth of God is no man's private property, to be kept under lock and key, as a secret hoard for personal enrichment. Whatever you know about Christ, tell it! Whatever you know about salvation and Sovereign Grace, tell it! It is revealed to you that you may bear it aloft like a flaming torch for the enlightening of others! God will not speak again to the man who does not spread His Truth. Samuel perceived his duty clearly.

And, dear Friends, to communicate the message of God was *a very weighty duty* to the child Samuel. Read what Eli said to him. "I pray you, hide it not from me: God do so to you, and more, also, if you hide anything from me of all the things that He said unto you." My Brother in the Gospel, what if you and I should keep back some painful part of God's message and God should do so to us, and more, also? I cannot bear to be lost and yet I *shall* be lost if I decline to warn others of their danger and of the doom of unbelief! I cannot bear to be cast away forever from the Presence of God, yet this woe will be unto me if I preach not the Gospel and do not declare the whole counsel of God! The result of unbelief and sin in others will fall on us if we do not warn them! O Sirs, if we are unfaithful, God will deal with us at the Day of Judgment as He will deal with the wicked—this is an awful outlook for us! May we never dare to tone down the more severe parts of the Gospel and flatter men in their sins, for if we

do this, God will mete out to us a portion with the condemned! If we have sown pillows for their armholes and rocked their cradles by our smooth speech, their eternal ruin shall lie at our door! How shall we bear it when God shall “do so to us, and more, also,” because we kept back His message from the sons of men who so much needed it? Let us resolve that come what will, we will keep back nothing of the Truth of God which the Lord has entrusted to us. A false witness for God, a liar to men’s souls—what sentence can be greater than his deserts? Is it possible for us to be too earnest here?

I have said enough upon the text in its first light. I pray for practical result from it. The Lord does speak to men and it behooves them to hear with reverence—and make known His Word with solemn fidelity and earnestness.

II. Let us now view the question as it comes FROM ELI.

I understand from Eli’s question, first, that *we should willingly learn, even from a child*. “What? Shall I, a man of 70 or 80, learn from a child?” asks one. Yes, unless you are more foolish than Eli, you may do so. Eli, with all his faults, was willing to hear what God might speak, even if he heard it from the lips of the child, Samuel. How unwise people are when they will not hear a man, but make up their mind that he knows nothing! Some would not hear the most precious Truth of God from the lips of a man whom they despise. Certain of the friars in Luther’s day confessed that much of what Luther said was very true and a reformation was certainly very much needed, but then, they would not have it from such a fellow as Luther—a renegade monk who spoke so rudely! Erasmus could be endured, but Luther made such a noise about it!

Teaching is often judged, not by its own value, but by the prejudices which people may happen to have concerning the source from which it comes. “I do not like him,” says one. Well, what does it matter whether you like *him* or not? What does he *say*? If a thing is true, never mind who says it. Believe it! If a babe could be put into the pulpit and it lisped out the precious Gospel of Christ, its lisping would be more worth hearing than all the eloquence of men of years and name whose objective might be to overthrow men’s faith. Let the Truth of God come from where it may, welcome it! If God has spoken, though it be but to a boy in knickerbockers, be ready to ask him, “What is the thing that the Lord has said to you?”

Next, learn from Eli that *we should be willing to know the very worst of our case*. Let me repeat that word—we should be willing to know the very worst of our case. I have used this expression in my own prayers many a time—“Lord, let me know the worst of my case.” I suggest it as a very excellent petition. Surely, we do not wish to be left in a fool’s paradise, pleased with the idea that we are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing—when all the while we are naked, poor and miserable. We desire to be informed as to our condition. We would know even the frightful truth, the humbling truth, what some would even call the *degrading* truth—if, indeed, it is truth. We wish to be degraded, if to know the truth would make us feel degraded. Better in the abyss of a truth than on the

summit of a lie! We wish to be, in our own sight, what we are in the sight of God. We would not be shams, hypocrites, veneered pretenders, but we would be good men and true.

Dear Friend, for this reason do not be angry with the minister if, when you go to hear him on the Lord's Day, his text is not a promise, or a sweet bit of doctrine, but a warning and an exhortation, or even a condemnation. Bare your back to the whip and take your share of the lashes. If the Lord's servant has nothing to give but what comes from the bitter box, do not make faces over it. If he is the Lord's steward and deals out God's Truth, quarrel not with him, lest you be found contending with your Maker! Take the portion, or I might say the *potion*—it may be the very thing you need. If God has sent you a bitter potion, it will be better for you than the sweetest dainties a smooth-tongued flatterer could prepare. Cry to God to search you and to make you to know your true condition as before His face.

Next, *we should desire to hear the whole of God's Word*. We should say to our minister, "I pray you hide it not from me. What is the thing that the Lord has said to you?" Oh, that our Hearers would desire this at our hands! Ask us, yes, plead with us to tell you all that we know of the Truth of God—and when you have heard all that we know of the Truth—search the Scriptures and find out *more*, that you may be well instructed in the things which make for your peace. Be like Eli—afraid to have anything kept from you—and anxious to have full information. Like Eli, we should demand faithfulness. We should say to the teacher, to the friend who is dealing with our soul, "I pray you hide it not from me; but be faithful to me." You do not go to a surgeon that he may falsely assure you that you have no wound. And I hope you do not come here that I may give you unsafe comfort and make you feel content in sin. No, Beloved, if you come aright, you say, "I go to hear the Word of God as I go to a physician, that I may have my case truthfully described and honestly treated by one who takes his Master's medicines out of his Master's treasures." Hear not that which makes you contented with *self*, but that which leads you to seek higher and better things. Let those who are foolish desire to be lulled into the deadly slumber of delusion, but for yourselves, seek after the Truth of God, the whole Truth of God and nothing but the Truth of God—and love that which humbles you and draws you nearer to your Lord!

Dear Hearers, pray for us who are preachers of the Gospel, that we may be made faithful and kept so! You know the prevailing currents of these times are toward flesh-pleasing teaching. Men aspire to be clever and, to that end, they must appear to be bold thinkers, highly cultured and far removed from the old worn-out notions of orthodoxy. Many are the floral displays in sermons! Sheaves of corn are too plain and rustic. This is the age of bouquets and wreaths of rare flowers. Paul must give way to Browning and David to Tennyson. Brothers, there are enough in the novelty business without us—we have something better to do! We have to give an account unto our God of what we do and say. And if we have been murderers of souls, it will be no excuse that we flourished the dagger well, or that, when we gave them poison, we mixed the draught cleverly and

presented it with poetical phrases. Pray for us that we may be clear of the blood of all men. Keep us right by saying to us, "What is the thing the Lord has said to you? I pray you, hide it not from me!"

III. And now, we conclude by considering the question TO AND FROM OURSELVES. I want to put a series of questions very briefly and with great solemnity.

Have we ever asked the Lord to speak to us? Yes, yes, my Sister, I know you have! And you, my Brother, you have done still more, for God has already spoken to you. But here, on Thursday evenings, are many unconverted people and I am much rejoiced that you care to come on a week-night to such a place as this. I do not attribute your presence, in every case, to the highest motive, for you come to hear a preacher of whom you have heard much talk. And at another time you will go to hear some noted orator in another place. Did you ever say to yourself, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak"? This would be a far better objective than listening to human rhetoric. Have you shut yourself up in your room, or have you gone into the woods, or climbed a hilltop, or sat down by the sea and said, "Speak to me, Lord! If there are voices out of the eternal and the unseen, here am I to hear them. In mercy speak to me"? My dear Hearer, are you God's creature and have you never heard the voice of your Creator? Do you think yourself God's child and do you live by the month together and never hear your Father's voice? This is pitiable—alas, it is blameworthy! I press the question home. Have you ever asked the Lord to speak to you?

Next, *have we all regarded what God has spoken?* When we were young, on a Sabbath we heard a word from the pulpit which seemed to go right through us—and then and there we wished that we could go home to our chamber to pray. And when we got home, we shut our door and we cried out in our anxiety because all was not right between God and our souls. But what came of it? The tears we shed—were they the tokens of coming conversion? Is it not sadly true that Monday found us at our old tricks? We had forgotten what manner of men we were! Was it not so? Is it so still with some of you? Has God spoken and spoken, and spoken, and spoken, again, and do you still act like the adder that will not hear, though the charmer charms most wisely? Are you as the ass and as the mule which have no understanding and need bit and bridle before you will obey your Master? The Lord have mercy upon you if it is so! If you have been brutish and obstinate, may Divine Grace subdue you.

A further question is this—*Have we shaped our lives by what God has said?* I know many people who read their Bibles and know what the Scripture means, but they never practice what God says to them. Among the rest, they neglect that great Gospel promise—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." They have neither believed nor been baptized. They are bid to do this and that as Believers—and, avowing themselves to be Believers, they yet refuse to their Lord the obedience which He claims! O my Hearers, to know the Word of God and not to put it into practice is to make rods for your own backs, for he that knew his Master's will and did it not was beaten with many stripes. The more you know, the more stripes will come upon you if you have only *knowledge* and not *obedience*! Does

not this truthful word come home to some who are sitting here at this time? It ought to do so! God grant that it may lead the “hearers only” to become “doers of the word”!

Next, Brothers and Sisters, *have we told what we know?* That is a practical point. I speak to quite a number of Christian men and women who would have to confess, “No. I am like Samuel, so far that I fear to tell Eli the vision.” You were going to speak to the person who sat in the pew with you the other Sunday and you almost got a word out, but it died on your lips. For idle words you will have to give an account. You meant to pray with your child, Mother, but you have not done it yet. What if she dies before you have done so? Good Friend, you meant to speak to the man at the next bench in your workshop. Ah, you have meant to do it so many times! I had a friend, a dear friend, who is now, I trust, in Heaven, and there was a man who used to take orders from him for goods and bring them to him when finished. He was a good and punctual workman, but not a Christian. Well, my friend intended—ah, he intended for *years*—to have a quiet conversation with that workman about his soul.

One day the goods came in, but a woman brought them. She said, “I am So-and-So’s wife. He finished these goods, but he is dead.” My friend said that the words were like a bullet to his heart, for he had so often thought of the man and often said to himself, “I must and will speak to him the next time he calls.” But somehow, when he came into the shop, business was brisk and he looked over the goods and paid for them as quickly as he could—and never began a conversation! Now the man was beyond the reach of warning or instruction. Do not let it be so with any person with whom you come in contact! Do as Samuel did—tell the whole of it if they ask you to tell them—or even if they do *not* ask you to tell them! Those who do not ask you are probably those who have the most need of your efforts! I believe there is an art in private conversation. Certain of our dear friends are always telling out the Gospel on all sides and they seem to do it with much ease. I speak of my Lord, also, to individuals, but I must confess that it does not come so easy to me to speak to an individual as to preach to thousands. We must school ourselves to it. That art of buttonholing and coming into close contact with individuals is one that we must cultivate—and we must not be satisfied until we become expert in it—for it is one of the chief ways in which men are saved.

Lastly, there is one question which I would like to ask and I have done. *Do our children ever rebuke us?* Perhaps we have no children—they are all grown up, but possibly we have grandchildren. This Samuel was to Eli like a grandchild. His sons were grown up and had left him. But here was this little one brought into the Temple to minister there and the old man came to be rebuked by this little child! I have known some—perhaps they are even now present—who are godless fathers, drunken fathers, but their grandchildren are members of the Church and good, gracious, amiable, lovely, useful children, too! Grandfathers, are you going down to Hell while your grandchildren are going to Heaven? I charge you by the living God, before whose bar you must surely stand, look at your little ones and hear their prayers and hear their hymns—could you bear to be everlast-

ingly separated from them? And, Fathers, this should come home closely to you. You know that girl of yours—how you love her—and well you may! Your heart is bound up in your little daughter. She is everything a child can be to a father—but she often weeps because she tries to get you to hear the Gospel and you will not come. Sunday to you is not what it is to her and that grieves her.

You were making a rabbit hutch last Sunday, were you not? And your child said, “Father, do come to the House of God,” but you would not come, and you pained your child. Will you bear in mind a solemn Truth of God? If your daughter goes to the right and you go to the left, you are probably parting forever. It is not possible that the way of sin should end where the way of righteousness will end! Do not choose eternal separation from your dear ones who love the Lord. Think these things over because, on a Sabbath, when we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, some of you have to go away and leave a wife or a dear child behind to commune at the sacred feast. Many thoughts are stirred at that dividing time. I wish that such searching of heart might arise tonight in downright earnest. There will be weeping—there will be *weeping*, at the Judgement Seat of Christ! And if children now rebuke their Christless friends, what will be the thunder of that rebuke when they shall be caught up to the Throne of the highest and their ungodly relatives are cast out forever into the pit prepared for the wicked? God bless you all richly, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
1 Samuel 2:27-36; 3.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—785, 393.**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR FRIENDS—I hope soon to return to my pulpit in renewed strength. I have great joy in hearing from readers that the sermons which I have issued from my place of rest have been much appreciated by them. It will be a luxury to speak again in the name of the Lord in the great congregation, but prayer is earnestly asked that the Word may be with power. I beg a special petition on my behalf as the reader finishes this sermon.

Mentone, January 9, 1891,

Your needy fellow servant,

C. H. SPURGEON.

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

“HERE I AM!”

NO. 3082

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 1908.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 19, 1874.**

***“The LORD called Samuel, and he answered, Here I am!”
1 Samuel 3:4.***

SAMUEL was a model child. He was the son of a prayerful mother. Hannah is one of the most notable pietists mentioned in the Scriptures. She possessed a truly original mind, but she was yet more famous for her piety—a woman who knew how to take her griefs to the Mercy Seat and cast them upon her God. So Samuel came of good stock but, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and he would have been none the better for his godly parentage unless the Spirit of God had early in life renewed his heart. May our dear children all grow up as Samuel did. And that they may do so, may they in their early life be such children as Samuel was!

It is to be noticed how obedient Samuel was to his guardian who stood to him in the place of a parent. We do not read of any disobedience or discourtesy to Eli. On the contrary, we see that the greatest respect and attention were paid by the child to the aged man who had the care of him. There is nothing in a child more beautiful than obedience—and a young Christian should be careful to keep his proper place—and the more he knows what his privileges are in being a child of God, the better should he fulfill his duty as a child at home.

The child Samuel was consecrated to God from his earliest days. His mother gave him to the Lord and He, Himself, confirmed the consecration. Happy is the child who is God’s child and who can say as truly as Paul said, “For to me to live is Christ.” Such Grace is seen even in children—may it be seen in all the children of all the families connected with this Church!

Samuel also had the great privilege of growing up amid holy services. He saw the daily sacrifices offered in the sanctuary and he was probably not absent from any of the means of Grace of that day. Parents do their children grievous wrong when they do not allow them to go with them to the House of Prayer. I have noticed, when the showers are falling, that you who try to keep a few pots of flowers in this smoky London, set them out to get the benefit of the rain. And you not only put out the large plants, but you put out the little ones, too, so that the precious drops may fall on them. Let your little children, like the little pots of flowers, be put under the gracious showers of the sanctuary and who knows how largely God may bless them? If children cannot understand all that is said, I think that where the preaching is what it should be, even a small

child will remember something and perhaps understand it better, by-and-by.

Further, Samuel was a child who was not merely given up to God and brought up in God's House, but he was doing God's work. He could not offer sacrifices, but he could trim the lamps. He could not speak like Eli, but he could open the doors of the Lord's House and it was as necessary that somebody should open the doors as that somebody else should be inside when the doors were opened—ready to attend to the more important parts of the solemn service. Happy, happy child, whose earliest work is work for God, whose earliest hearing is hearing the voice of God, whose earliest breath is spent in the praise of God! God grant, of His infinite mercy, that our children may be such children, and He shall have the praise!

I am going to apply Samuel's little speech, "Here I am," specially to grown-up people, yet I am not going to exclude children from the application. When God called Samuel, he answered, "Here I am!" Now, first, *what did this show?* And secondly, *what did it foretell?*

I. I must devote the greater part of the time to the question, WHAT DID SAMUEL'S ANSWER, "HERE I AM," SHOW?

It showed, first, *a hearing ear*. God spoke and Samuel heard. Have you a hearing ear, dear Brother? Be grateful if you have, for all men have not that blessing. There are some who have an itching ear—and they come to a place of worship not to hear profit, but merely to judge, to criticize, to find fault, to draw comparisons between one speaker and another. If that is the case with you, dear Friend, may the Lord cure your ears of itching and open them to the Truth of God, for they are stopped up! John Bunyan speaks of Ear-Gate being stopped up with filth, and it is often so. Men cannot hear the voice of God because there is sin in the way—some darling sin—and they are not wise enough to realize that what they hear will be the means either of saving them or of damning them. Hearing true Gospel sermons is one of the most solemn occupations in which intelligent beings can be employed. Hearing ears are by no means common things—happy are you who have them.

Samuel was asleep, yet he heard God's voice. I know some people who are awake, yet who have not heard it. They have been sitting here with their eyes wide open, yet they have seen nothing of the Truth—and with their ears open, too, yet the voice of God has never penetrated the secret chambers of their souls. How long some of you have been hearers only, and therefore not true hearers! How long have the ears of your heart been dull of hearing! You have heard my voice, but you have not heard God's voice. You have heard the voice of earnest teachers and preachers, but as yet the voice of God has not reached your heart.

In Samuel's case, it was the first thing that God had spoken to him, yet he heard Him, but in your case, God has spoken to you many times, yet you have not heard His voice once. How many times has God spoken to some of you? Can you calculate how many Gospel sermons you have heard? I heard someone say, the other day, as she opened her Bible and looked at the texts which she had marked from which she had heard me preach these many years, "What a responsibility to have heard so many

sermons from such texts as these!" And she said more which it is not for me to repeat, but I felt, "Yes, there is truth in that." If God has sent us to preach His Word, you may depend upon it that He will resent it if you do not hear the message that He sends to you through us. It will not merely be a rejection of the ambassador of Christ, but a rejection of the King who sent him to you! Therefore, I pray that God may give to each one of you a hearing ear.

I expect that the voice of God to Samuel was only a faint call. It was in the night watches and I suppose that the Lord spoke softly, "Samuel, Samuel." Yet Samuel heard at once. But the voice of God to some of you has been a loud one. He has spoken to you not only in loving exhortations, but with the voice of threats. You have had Christ set before you in the gentleness of His love, but you have also seen Him in the terror of His vengeance. You have heard concerning the wrath to come, the Pit without a bottom and the fire that never shall be quenched. I can say, with Paul, that "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." I have not kept back anything from you, however terrible His Truth was. These lips have never sought to make the penalty of sin appear lighter than Scripture makes it, nor to pare down the dread solemnities of eternity to please this evil generation. No, we have let Sinai speak with its pealing thunders as well as Calvary with its gentle wooing and yet, alas, there are still some here who have not heard God's voice so as to heed it!

God has spoken to you through your conscience. He has made you shake in your beds and tremble as you walked about the streets. He has spoken to you through that dear child who once nestled in your bosom, but who was called away to Heaven. He has spoken through that beloved friend with whom you took sweet counsel, who was suddenly smitten with a death sickness and taken away from you. It might have been yourself—that funeral might have been your own—and then where would your soul have been? God has spoken to you by the fever that laid you low, the effects of which are still upon you. He has spoken to you through that "accident" from which you only escaped, as it were, by the skin of your teeth! Again and again has God spoken to you so that both your ears have tingled, but there it ended! The avenue from your ears to your heart has still been blocked up by the devil and his angels—and by your sin. And as yet you have not answered the Divine call and said, "Here I am!" If you were deaf, you might be excused for not hearing. But you have ears, yet you hear not. You could hear God's voice if you wished to hear it, but you are not willing—your inability lies in your will—and that inability is the real obstruction. It is not so much a subject for pity as for censure, and so you will find it at the Last Great Day. But I pray that there may be many among you who, when the Gospel call is sounded, will say, "Here I am! I am a hearer of the Word and I do enjoy hearing it. It is sweet to me and I do lay hold on eternal life through hearing the voice of Jesus in the Gospel." Pleased be the name of the Lord if you can truthfully say this!

The next thing I see in this answer of Samuel is *a responsive heart*. "The Lord called Samuel," and he not merely heard, but sounded, and said, "Here I am!" Many of you have heard the Gospel. Be thankful if, in addition to hearing it, you have been able to give a response to it. I remember the first response that I gave to the Gospel. It threatened me with punishment for my sin—and when I was able to respond to it, I said, "I deserve that threat and I bow my head to the dust," and, for some years the only part of the Gospel to which I could respond was that part which destroyed my self-righteousness and my carnal hopes—and made me feel that I was lost. Now, if you cannot go any further than that, thank God that you can go as far! If, when the Word that is preached to you says, "You have broken the Law of God and you must pay the penalty for your disobedience," you say, "Here I am. I cannot complain of the justice of the sentence." I thank God that you can go as far as that. There is something of the life of God in the soul that yields its assent and consent to the denunciations of Divine Justice.

But, Beloved, how much better it is when you can go further than this! Some of us can recollect when we went further, when the voice of God sounded over the mountains of our guilt and said, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." And we replied, "Here I am," and we looked unto Him and were lightened and our faces were not ashamed! Christ said, "Where are you, Sinner?" And we said, "Here I am!" "Come," He said, "to My Cross. Are you there, Sinner?" And we answered, "Here I am!" "I am looking down with love," He said. "Look up with joy if you are there." And we answered, "Here I am!" Oh, it was a blessed thing for us when we had come to that point where Christ would receive us, where the Gospel spoke of pardon and we accepted it! Where the Gospel spoke of simple faith and we exercised the simple faith which God had given to us! Where the Gospel spoke of putting away sin and we rejoiced to have it put away! Where the Gospel spoke of repentance and we rejoiced to have repentance and to forsake the world and to follow Jesus!

In addition to having a hearing ear and a responsive heart, it is clear that Samuel had *a teachable spirit*. When the Lord called Samuel, he said, "Here I am." That is to say, "I am ready to hear what You have to say to me. Speak, Lord. I only want You to speak and it shall be enough for me. I am Your willing disciple, waiting to learn whatever You will teach me." I do not know any position that is better for a Christian to occupy than that of sitting with Mary at the Master's feet and looking up into His face, saying, "Lord, I love You and I know something of Your Truth, but have You not more of it to teach me? Lord, is there any duty which You have enjoined upon Your followers, but which I have not yet seen to be a duty? Then show it to me Lord, for here I am, waiting to know Your will. Is there a Doctrine that I have kicked against, which is, after all, Your Doctrine? Then, Lord, instruct me in it! Will it cause me to forsake my former associates if I am true to You? If it must be so, I will give it all up! Lord, here I am, waiting to learn of You.

It is the lack of this resolve that makes so many denominations in the world today. Most professors never look in the Bible to see what is right and what is wrong. Their father and mother went to a certain place of

worship, so they go to it. They saw things in a certain light and their children do the same. But they never search the Scriptures to see whether these things are so or not. I am afraid there are many Christians and some ministers, too, who would be afraid to search the Scriptures lest they should learn too much from them! We should soon end all the divisions in the Church of Christ if we took this blessed Book only—no book of prayer, no book of sermons, no book of devotions and no catechism as our rule of life—nothing but this Book—and opened it, saying, “Lord, speak, for Your servant hears. Whatever You have to say to me, here I am, waiting to know and to do Your will.” I ask every Christian here whether he can honestly say that he has given up his mind to be molded by the Holy Spirit—whether, upon questions that are in dispute among men, he has really searched the Scriptures and whether he is prepared at all costs to follow the Truth of God wherever it leads him? For this is both the duty and the honor of the Christian—and in that day when the Lord shall stand upon Mount Zion, the hundred and forty and four thousand who shall be especially honored will be those who “*follow the Lamb* wherever He goes.” Notice those words, “*wherever* He goes.” Following the Lamb in little things and great things, in Doctrinal matters, in the Christian ordinances—not following man’s custom, nor any Church’s regulations, but following the Lamb “*wherever* He goes.” [See Sermons #2324, Volume 39—THE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB and #2456, Volume 42—THE LAMB OUR LEADER—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] God give us Grace, then, to reply to the call of Jesus, “Here I am, Lord. Do You bid me believe this Doctrine? Here I am! Do You bid me be baptized in Your name? Here I am! Do You bid me come to Your Table? Here I am! Do you bid me work for You, or suffer for You, or even die for You? Show me what You would have me do, for here I am, waiting and willing to do it.”

Now, in the fourth place, this answer of Samuel showed that *he was in the right position*. Adam was not in his right position when God called him in the Garden of Eden, but Samuel was in bed and that was where he ought to have been, for it was bedtime. So, when the Lord called Samuel, he was not ashamed to answer, “Here I am!” I wonder whether some professing Christians would be willing to say to God, “Here I am,” when they are in certain positions and conditions? They can hardly justify themselves to themselves—how, then, can they justify themselves to their Lord? I pray, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that we may all live in such a position that whenever the Lord calls to us, we may be able to answer without shame, “Here I am!” We should never be where we would be ashamed to meet our Master. For instance, the Lord Jesus calls all His servant to come out from the world and be separate—set apart unto Him—to go outside the camp, bearing His reproach. Suppose He were to come here tonight and begin to speak to us about being separate from sinners—could each one of you answer, “Lord, here I am. By Your Grace, I have taken up my cross and come right away from everything of which You would disapprove, to the best of my knowledge. And, by Your Grace, in my life I have endeavored not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of my mind”?

Further, the Lord Jesus Christ bids His children join in fellowship with one another by uniting in Christian Churches. Suppose He were to come tonight and to ask us who profess to be His, "Are you all joined together in the bonds of Christian union that I ordained for you?"—are there not some Christians here who never made a Scriptural profession of their faith and who, therefore, could not reply, "Here I am"? Where are you, then? "Oh, I am sneaking away somewhere in the background for fear anybody should find me out. I am afraid I should be jeered at if I were known to be a Christian." O, you coward! Have you never read that solemn message of Christ, "Whoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He shall come in His own Glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels"? When the muster roll of the visible Church is called, it is a great comfort for anyone to be able to answer, "Here I am!"

Besides that, the Lord Jesus would have His people meet together for prayer. On the next Prayer Meeting night, will each one of you be able to answer, "Here I am"? I hope so. Yet there are some of you whom I do not very often see at the Prayer Meeting. I have no fault to find with the most of you, for you love the House of God and you love to meet with the saints for prayer and praise and worship. But there are some who forsake the assembling of themselves together. A Brother prayed, recently, for those who were detained on beds of sickness and armchairs of laziness—and I am afraid there are a good many of the second sort! Do not you be one of them, but when the roll of those that meet together for prayer is read, may you be able to reply when your name is called, "Here I am!"

Christ would also have His people work for Him. When the great Captain of our salvation bids the sergeant call the roll of His soldiers, I like to hear the answer, whether it is from the pulpit, or from the Sunday school, or from the Tract Society, "Lord, here I am! Here I am! Here I am!" But what has become of that man who was so zealous five years ago? I do not hear him say, "Here I am." No, he says, "I cannot come so far now." Yet it is no further than it was five years ago! It is not that the distance is too far for him to walk—it is his distance from Christ that accounts for his absence. But when the roll was read just now, where was that man who used to teach in the Sunday school ten years ago? He has given up, he says, to let the young people have a turn. Yes, but he would not like the Lord to leave off blessing him and to give the young people all His Presence and Grace! Suppose the sun were to say, "I have shone long enough and I shall put out my flames"? And the air were to say, "I have supplied breath long enough"? And the sea were to say, "I have pulsed long enough as the lifeblood of the world"? And the earth were to say, "I have yielded bread long enough"? Where would we all be? When we need to receive no more, then we may say that we will do no more—but as long as we are receiving of the Grace of God, we must come into the ranks of the workers for Him and each one reply—when our name is called, "Lord, here I am." I ask every Believer—whereabouts in Christ's field of service are you? What are you doing for the Lord Jesus

Christ? Are any of you compelled to reply that you are doing nothing for Him?

Perhaps one says, “My family requires my care.” Then give it your care—you cannot do better than serve the Lord at home. I have known fathers go on preaching who ought to have stayed at home to teach their own children. And good women who have been very busy at sewing meetings who would have been better employed at home. But I am not now speaking about those who are doing good works at home. If that is your sphere, fill it, and God bless you in it! But I am speaking to others—especially young people upon whom there is a claim for service for Christ. What are *you* doing for Jesus, my young Brother? “Nothing at present, but I have been thinking of doing something, by-and-by.” Ah, but it is good for a man that he should bear this yoke in his youth. There is no worker for Christ like the young worker! I bless God that I was preaching the Gospel at 16 years of age! I could never have found such pleasure and ease in doing my Master’s work if I had not begun to do it early. And you Christian young people cannot serve the Master too soon. Samuel said, “Here I am,” and I want you, John, and Thomas, and William, and you, Mary, and Jane, and Elizabeth—each one to reply distinctly, “Here I am! Here I am, here I am!” Come into Christ’s Church, engage in Christ’s work and adorn the Doctrine of God your Savior in all things!

Once more, I think that Samuel’s answer implied *a submissive spirit*. He said, “Here I am,” as much as to say, “What am I to do, Lord? I am ready for any service that is appointed unto me. Here I am!” That was a grand answer of the Prophet Isaiah to the Lord’s question, “Whom shall I send?”—“Here I am; send me.” Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, are we, all of us, up to that mark in the matter of service for the Savior? Several of our Sunday schools are short of teachers, will you not say, “Here I am”? It is a very delightful Christian work and Christians ought to spring forward to fill every gap in the ranks. There are thousands of workers needed in this great city—workers to go into the lodging-houses, workers to visit poverty-stricken districts, workers to get at the rich in their drawing rooms, and workers to get at the poor in their slums. O Christians, will you not answer with alacrity, “Here we are, Lord! What department of service can we take?” Suppose the Lord were to set you, my Sister, to work among the extremely poor—would you say, “Here I am”? Suppose, my Brother, you had to go on working and everybody sneered at you—could you still say, “Here I am”? It is easy, when there is a good berth to be had in the Church, to say, “Here I am!” If there is a bishopric to be given away, you can find a self-denying minister who says, “Here I am!” But if it is only a poor living, not so readily do we get the response, “Here I am!” Yet if our hearts were in a right state, we would be willing to do anything that the Master gave us to do! If two angels were sent out of Heaven and one was to preach in this pulpit and the other to sweep a muddy crossing, they would not mind which they did. So long as God gave them their work, they would feel an equal

pleasure and an equal honor in doing it whatever it might be. Are you ready to say, for service, "Here I am"?

Can each Christian here say the same with regard to suffering? Here I come to heart-searching work. If Christ wants one who can bear reproach for Him, can you say, "Here I am"? If He wants one who can suffer the loss of prosperity and become poor, can you say, "If it is for Your Glory, Lord, here I am"? And can you endure it if you do say so? If God should lay a heavy affliction upon you and rack you with pain from day to day, can you say, "Here I am"? In the dreary night-watches, I confess that I have not found it easy. I have wanted to be able to say, "Lord, here I am," but I have caught myself saying, "I do not want to be here much longer. I want to be up preaching the Gospel again, for I do not like lying here, going without my necessary rest and feeling countless depressions of spirit and grievous pains of body." But I know some Christians who are more used to pain who have learned to say with old Eli, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him." I daresay some of you remember Dr. Hamilton's story of poor Betty who said, "The Lord said to me, 'Betty, look after your husband and your house,' and I did it. And then He said, 'Betty, go and talk to your neighbors about Jesus,' and I did that. And then He said, 'Betty, go and lie on the bed and cough,' and I am doing it, blessed be His holy name!" Ah, but it needs a great deal of Grace to lie and cough to God's Glory! Yet it is being done, and the groans of sick, yet submissive saints are as musical to God's ear as the hallelujahs of archangels!

II. Now my time has fled, so I can only give you the outline of what I was going to say in answer to my second question, WHAT DID THIS UTTERANCE OF THE CHILD SAMUEL FORETELL FOR HIM?

Why, it foretold, first, *further communications from God*. Those who answer to God's call shall hear His voice again! If you are faithful to what you know, you shall know more! If you can truly say, "Here I am," God will call you again and keep on calling you as long as He has messages to give you.

It foretold, secondly, *higher service for Samuel*. The little boy who, on his bed, said to God, "Here I am," would grow up to be a Prophet who would speak God's words so faithfully that God would not let one of his words fall to the ground. The child who promptly answers to God's voice becomes the echo of God's voice before long. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is also faithful in much." He who uses one talent well shall have ten talents entrusted to him.

It foretold, next, that *Samuel would have prevalence in prayer*. God spoke and Samuel heard, so he might be sure that the Lord would, as we say, "return the compliment." Very often God will not hear us because we will not hear Him. If He speaks and we are deaf to His voice, we must not wonder if we find Him deaf when we speak to Him! Our success in prayer will often depend upon our obedience to the precept—you cannot have the promise torn away from the precept. That would be like cutting a living child in two.

And, lastly, I am sure that this reply of Samuel's foretold that *he would have happier calls afterwards*. He who was called to hear a servile

or menial message in the dead of night and yet said, "Here I am," should afterwards be called to lead the Lord's chosen people, to speak powerfully to them in Jehovah's name and to anoint Saul to reign over them when they clamored for a king! O, dear Brother or Sister in Christ, the Lord Jesus has called and you have answered, "Here I am!" He has called for you to suffer and you have said, "Here I am!" He has called you, my Sister, to give up your husband and your children and you have yielded to His will and answered, "Here I am!" So let me tell you what He will do, by-and-by. When the pitcher is broken at the fountain and the wheel is broken at the cistern, He will say to you, "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away." And that message will be so welcome to you that you will gladly answer, "Lord, here I am." Have I not seen many Christians propped up in their bed with their pillows, speaking joyously to all around and telling them that the chariot had come to bear them to their Beloved? Have I not seen them step into that chariot to be borne away to dwell at God's right hand forever? That was their way of saying to the Lord, "Here I am!" Their bodies slumber in the dust, as yours and mine shall do before long unless the Lord shall first come—and one of these days, when we are lying beneath the sod, and the daisies are blooming above us, there will come the sound of the archangel's trumpet! And the Lord's voice will be in it and He will call, "Samuel! Samuel!" and you will recognize His voice, and know your own name, and you will answer, "Here I am!" And your very dust shall rise again to be re-animated in a nobler image and made like unto your Lord! Then will come the Judgment and the Great White Throne shall be set and the books shall be opened—and the King will say to those upon His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." What a joy it will be to each one of His saints then to answer, "Here I am, Lord! By Your Sovereign Grace I am at Your right hand, numbered among Your sheep and welcomed with them to Glory everlasting!"

Perhaps some of you think that only a great and eminent saint will be able, in that day, to answer, "Here I am." But I can tell you one name that will be read out then—"Mrs. Much-Afraid," and she will answer, "Here I am!" There will be something strange in her voice, for she never used to speak like that when she was down here. But now she speaks up as boldly as Paul himself does, "Here I am, Lord!" And Ready-to-Halt, without his crutches, will answer as bravely as any of the Apostles! And poor members of the Church who were not much noticed on earth, will each one answer, "Here I am!" And that feeble one who was always doubting, trembling, fearing, fretting and worrying—yet for all that did somehow rest in the Lord—will answer, "Here I am!" I think the music of Heaven would lose its sweetest note if there were not many a little one there to answer, "Here I am!"

If, on Christmas night, when you were gathered around the blazing fire and the big log was burning on the hearth, and you were ready to sing for joy, if, I say, somebody were to ask, "Where is the baby?" There would be but one answer, "What? Is she not here?" Mother does not

know where she is, does not father know? No, he thought the little one was all right. Do not her brothers and sisters know where the little one is? Suppose someone should say, "Don't worry yourselves about her, you be merry among yourselves." But mother cannot be merry without her baby, and father cannot rest, and brothers and sisters cannot rejoice as long as the little one is not there to share their joy. And I can tell you that God, Himself, and Christ, Himself, and the Holy Spirit, Himself, and the holy angels and all the host of the redeemed could not be happy in Heaven if one dear child of God who had trusted in Jesus should be missing at the Last Great Day! They would stop the angelic harps to find that lost one, and empty out Heaven, and send every angel and every saint out as a scout to find this poor little lost one that cannot be lost! If you are trusting in Jesus, answer to your name now, and say to Christ, "Lord, here I am!" And then you will be able to say to Him, before the Throne, "Here I am, Lord, and here will I adore You forever and forever!" God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 SAMUEL 2:12-36; 3:1-18.**

1 Samuel 2:12. *Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.* What a very dreadful thing it was that these sons of a man of God, the sons of God's high priest, were not, themselves, sons of God, but sons of Belial, foul-hearted, foul-mouthed, foul-living men, who knew not the very God at whose altar they served and in whose house they lived!

13, 14. *And the priest's custom with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh hook of three teeth in his hand; and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot and all that the flesh hook brought up, the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came there.* God had appointed a proper portion for His priests so that they who ministered at the altar might live of the altar. But these wicked men were not content with the Divine allowance, so they robbed the altars of God and showed such greed as to make the appointed sacrifices to be obnoxious to the people.

15, 16. *Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of you, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently and then take as much as your soul desires; then he would answer him, No; but you shall give it to me now: and if not, I will take it by force.* It is a terrible thing when God's servants are domineering and oppressive towards the people of God! They who should be the gentlest of all and the most self-denying of all must not talk as this priest's servant did, and he no doubt talked as the young men whom he served bade him talk.

17. *Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.* It is horrible when those who should make God great among men cause His service to be despised and

abhorred. When those who should be the friends and servants of God act like His enemies, it is indeed terrible.

18-24. *But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover his mother made him a little coat and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give you seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home. And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bore three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD. Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And he said unto them, Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. No, my sons; for it is not a good report that I hear: you make the LORD'S people to transgress. That is all that the godly old man said to his wicked sons. He was far too gentle in his way of reproving them. He was evidently afraid of his own sons—not the only man who has been in the same predicament!*

25. *If one man sins against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sins against the LORD, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them. They had gone so far in vice and sin that the Lord did not mean to forgive them. They had transgressed so foully that He would permit them to go on in sin until they perished in it!*

26-30. *And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the LORD, and also with men. And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus says the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of your father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before Me? And did I give unto the house of your father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? Why did you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering, which I have commanded in My habitation; and honor your sons above Me, to make yourselves fat with the chief of all the offerings of Israel My people? Therefore the LORD God of Israel says, I said indeed that your house, and the house of your father, should walk before Me forever. "But I said it conditionally upon your good behavior. I installed you into the priest's office for life, and your sons might have continued in it after you if they had kept My commandments."*

30-36. *But now the LORD says, Be it far from Me; for them that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come that I will cut off your arm, and the arm of your father's house, that there shall not be an old man in your house. And you shall see an enemy in My habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in your house forever. And the man of yours, whom I shall not cut off from My altar, shall be to consume your eyes, and to grieve your heart: and all the increase of your house shall die in the flower of their age. And this shall be a sign unto you*

that shall come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die, both of them. And I will raise Me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in My heart and in My mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before My anointed forever. And it shall come to pass that everyone that is left in your house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray you, into one of the priests' offices that I may eat a piece of bread. The same sad prophecy that the Lord communicated to old Eli was also revealed in a very special manner to young Samuel.

1 Samuel 3:1-13. [Mr. Spurgeon preached two sermons on verses 9 and 10—See Sermons #586, Volume 10—THE CHILD SAMUEL'S PRAYER and #2526, Volume 43—“SPEAK, LORD”—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the Word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; and before the lamp of God went out in the Temple of the LORD, where the Ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; that the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here I am! And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here I am; for you called me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here I am; for you did call me. And he answered, I called not, my son, lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the Word of the LORD yet revealed unto him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here I am; for you did call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if He calls you, that you shall say, Speak, LORD; for Your servant hears. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for Your servant hears. And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of everyone that hears it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. Take warning, fathers and mothers, by this experience of old Eli!*

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

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

THE CHILD SAMUEL'S PRAYER

NO. 586

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

“Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears.”
1 Samuel 3:9.

IN the days of Eli the Word of the Lord was precious and there was no open vision. It was well, when the Word did come, that one chosen individual had the hearing ear to receive it and the obedient heart to perform it. Eli failed to tutor his sons to be the willing servants and the attentive hearers of the Lord's Word. In this he was without the excuse of inability since he successfully trained the child Samuel in reverent attention to the Divine will. O that those who are diligent about the souls of others would look well to their own households!

Alas, poor Eli, like many in our day, you are made the keeper of the vineyards, but your own vineyard you have not kept! As often as he looked upon the gracious child, Samuel, he must have felt the heartache. When he remembered his own neglected and unchastened sons and how they had made themselves vile before all Israel, Samuel was the living witness of what Grace can work where children are trained up in God's fear. Hophni and Phinehas were sad specimens of what parental indulgence will produce in the children of the best of men. Ah, Eli, if you had been as careful with your own sons as with the son of Hannah they had not been such men of Belial, nor would Israel have abhorred the offering of the Lord because of the fornication which those priestly reprobates committed at the very door of the tabernacle!

O for Grace to so nurse our little ones for the Lord that they may hear the Lord when He shall be pleased to speak to them! Let us proceed at once to consider our short but very suggestive text in four aspects and I pray that the Holy Spirit may speak to us through His Word. We shall meditate upon this Scripture, first, as the prayer of a little child. Secondly, as the cry of an anxious soul. Thirdly, as the prayer of an earnest Believer. And fourthly as the spirit of a dying saint.

I. First of all we shall take our text AS THE PRAYER OF A LITTLE CHILD. Samuel was blessed with a gracious father and what is of even more importance, he was the child of an eminently holy mother. Hannah was a woman of great poetic talent, as appears from her memorable song—“My heart rejoices in the Lord, my horn is exalted in the Lord; my

mouth is enlarged over my enemies, because I rejoiced in Your salvation." The soul of poetry lives in every line—a brave but chastened spirit breathes in every sentence! Even the Virgin Mary, the most blessed among women, could do no other than use expressions of a similar import.

Better still, Hannah was a woman of great prayer. She had been a woman of a sorrowful spirit, but her prayers at last returned to her in blessing and she had this son given her of the Lord. He was very dear to his mother's heart and she, therefore, to show her gratitude and in fulfillment of the vow which in her anguish she had vowed unto the Lord, would consecrate the best thing she had and presented her son before the Lord in Shiloh—a lesson to all godly parents to see to it that they dedicate their children unto God. How highly favored shall we be if our children shall all be like Isaac—children of the promise! What blessed parents should we be if we saw our children all rise up to call the Redeemer blessed!

It has been the lot of some of you to see all your children numbered with the people of God—all your jewels are now in Jehovah's casket. In their early childhood you gave them up to God and dedicated them to Him in earnest prayer and now the Lord has given you your petition which you asked of Him. I like our friends to hold little services in their own houses when their family is increased. It seems good and profitable for friends to assemble and prayer to be offered that the child may be an inheritor of the promises—that he may be early called by mighty Grace and received into the Divine family.

You will perceive, dear Friends, that as Samuel was put under the care and tuition of Eli, Eli had instructed him in some degree in the spirit of religion. But he does not appear to have explained to him the peculiar form and nature of those special and particular manifestations of God which were given to His Prophets. Little dreaming, I dare say, that Samuel would ever be, himself, the subject of them. On that memorable night, when towards morning the lamp of God was about to go out, the Lord cried, "Samuel, Samuel." The young child was not able to discern—for he had not been taught—that it was the voice of God and not the voice of man.

That he had learned the spirit of true religion is indicated by his instantaneous obedience and the habit of obedience became a valuable guide to him in the perplexities of that eventful hour. He runs to Eli and says, "Here am I, for you did call me." And though this is three times repeated, yet he seems not at all loath to leave his warm bed and run to his foster-father to see if he could get him any comfort that his old age might require during the night, or otherwise do his bidding. This was a sure sign that

the child had acquired the healthy principle of obedience though he did not understand the mystery of the prophetic call.

Better far to have the young heart trained to bear the yoke than to fill the childish head with knowledge, however valuable. An ounce of obedience is better than a ton of learning. When Eli perceived that God had called the child, he taught him his first little prayer. It is a very short one, but it is a very full one—"Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears." Many questions have been raised as to whether children ought to be taught a form of prayer. As far as I can judge I think not, for I do not think that forms of prayer, although they may be allowed and God may accept them, are ever of very great advantage to those who use them.

Forms of prayer are something like the stilts of a cripple. If a man begins with them, it is very probable that he will never be able to do without them. They resemble the copious notes and manuscripts of certain ministers who began with them and are quite unable, now, to preach without them. Children who are taught a form of prayer may, perhaps, by Divine Grace be enabled to use the form in all sincerity of heart—I hope they may. But I think they are more likely to understand the things of God if, instead of teaching them the form, you explain to them the *meaning* and the *value* of prayer.

I take this to be the best plan. Let the Christian parent explain to the child what prayer is—tell him that God answers prayer. Direct him to the Savior and then urge him to express his desires in his own language, both when he rises and when he goes to rest. Gather the little ones around your knee and listen to their words, suggesting to them their needs and reminding them of God's gracious promises. You will be amazed and, I may add, sometimes amused, too. But you will be frequently surprised at the expressions they will use, the confessions they will make, the desires they will utter. And I am certain that any Christian person standing within earshot and listening to the simple prayer of a little child earnestly asking God for what it thinks it wants, would never afterwards wish to teach a child a form, but would say that as a matter of education to the heart the extemporaneous utterance was infinitely superior to the best form and that the form should be given up forever.

However, do not let me speak too sweepingly. If you must teach your child to say a form of prayer, at least take care that you do not teach him to say anything which is not true. If you teach your children a catechism, mind that it is thoroughly scriptural, or you may train them up to tell falsehoods. Do not call the child up and command him to say, "in my Baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of Heaven." If you want to educate him for the gallows, teach him to utter untruths about sacred things! If you would make him an habitual

deceiver, teach him the Church Catechism and make him say, "God the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies me and all the elect people of God"—when he is altogether unsanctified and has no evidence of being elected.

I pray you, if you would have honest children, do not teach them to say that he thanks his heavenly Father, "who has brought him into this state of salvation," when he knows—and you know—that he is not saved at all. Teach him nothing but the Truth as it is in Jesus so far as he can learn it, and pray the Holy Spirit to write that Truth of God upon his heart. Better to supply no signposts to the young traveler than to mislead him with false ones. The light of a wrecker's beacon is worse than darkness. Teach our youth to make untruthful statements in religions matters and Atheism can scarcely do more to corrupt their minds!

Formal religion is a deadly foe to vital godliness. If you teach a catechism, or if you teach a form of prayer to your little ones, let it all be true. And, as far as possible never put into a child's mouth a word which the child cannot truly say from his heart. Dear Friends, we must be more careful about truthfulness and correctness in speech. If a child looked out of a *window* at anything going on in the street and then told you that he saw it from the *door*, you ought to make him tell the tale over again so as to impress upon him the necessity of being truthful in every respect. Especially in things connected with religion keep your child back from any form until he has a right to be a partaker of it. Never encourage him to come to the Lord's Table unless you really believe that there is a work of Grace in his heart—for why should you lead him to eat and drink his own damnation?

Insist with all your heart that religion is a solemn reality not to be mimicked or pretended to and seek to bring the child to understand that there is no vice more abhorrent before God than hypocrisy. Do not make your young Samuel a young hypocrite, but train up your darling to speak before the Lord with a deep solemnity and a conscientious truthfulness! And let him never dare to say, either in answer to a catechism question, or as a form of prayer, anything which is not *positively* true. If you must have a form of prayer, let it not express such desires as a child never had, but let it be adapted to his young capacity.

At the same time, I would again say that it would be infinitely better to leave the child alone as to the words, having earnestly inculcated upon him the spirit of prayer. Beloved, when we see any trace of good in our youth, then, like Eli, we should be the more earnest to have them trained up in the faith. Let the child learn the Assembly's Catechism, even though he does not understand all that is in it—and as soon as the young heart can comprehend the things of Jesus, labor in power of the Holy Spirit to bring it to a simple dependence upon the great Sacrifice.

It is said of the Rev. John Angell James, "Like most men who have been eminent and honored in the Church of Christ, he had a godly mother who would take her children to her chamber and with each, separately, pray for the salvation of their souls. This exercise, which fulfilled her own responsibility, was molding the character of her children, and most, if not all of them, rose up to call her blessed. When did such means ever fail?"

I beseech you, the teachers of the Sunday school—though I scarcely need to do so, for I know how zealous you are in this matter—as soon as ever you see the first peep of day in your children, encourage their young desires. Believe in the conversion of children, as children! Believe that the Lord can call them by His Grace, can renew their hearts, can give them a part and a lot among His people long before they reach the prime of life. Oh, that the Lord may give us to see many Samuels added to this Church, as we have seen them in days gone by!

You that are little ones, when the Lord speaks to you, cry to Him, "Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears." And when in the class, or here in the Tabernacle, the Word of God is preached to sinners, remember it is preached to you quite as much as to the men who are six feet high. And do lift up your little hearts to God with the desire that while we are preaching, God would speak to you. Do, dear children, expect the Lord to meet with you. Boys and girls have been saved—

***"Many dear children are gathering there,
For of such is the kingdom of Heaven."***

We have baptized many like you, at twelve, thirteen and fourteen years of age who have made a very clear profession of their faith. And rejoiced, indeed, shall we be if we see you boys and girls coming forward and saying, "God has called us, has brought us to put our trust in Jesus. And here we are."

Young Samuel, the Lord calls you! And you are a privileged one to be called so soon, for early Grace frequently becomes eminent Grace! And those who begin early with God are often preserved in this world to be of distinguished service in the courts of the Lord's House. May that be your lot and mine!

II. We have perhaps spoken enough upon this point. Let us now consider the words as THE CRY OF AN ANXIOUS SOUL. What an overwhelming sight is this vast crowd of immortal souls! What a joy would it be to me if I could hope that you were *all* anxious to find the Savior! Many of you who assemble constantly within these walls, though you have had serious impressions, are not yet saved. As you came in tonight this thought may have been uppermost—"Oh, that God would meet with my soul tonight."

Some of you young woman have been in my Sister's, Mrs. Bartlett's class, this afternoon and it is very hard to be in that class long without receiving solemn impressions. God has been visiting your class just lately. He has removed a heavenly-minded and well-beloved Sister. He has carried her aloft to the upper and better world. She could die singing and rejoicing in her Savior, for her usual frame of mind was set forth in these words, "Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears."

Well, dear Friends, this bereaving Providence has had a loud voice to your class! God has worked a solemn impression upon your minds by it and you prayed as you entered the Tabernacle, "O God, save my soul this night!" Let me recommend to you the use of this simple prayer now while you are sitting in the pew, "Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears." "Speak, Lord!" Pray that first. "Speak, Lord! While the minister is speaking, Lord, speak! I have heard the minister's voice and sometimes it awakens me, but I am not saved and I never shall be, Lord, if the minister speaks alone. Speak, Lord! My mother has talked with me. My earnest teacher has sought to lead me to the Savior. But I know that the words of blessed men and women will fall to the ground if they come alone. Speak, Lord!

"Your voice said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. Speak, Lord! And make light in my darkened mind! Your voice called Lazarus from the grave though he had been dead four days. Speak, Lord! And make me live! Oh, let it be tonight a real work of Grace in my soul! Let Divine power come and operate upon me." My dear Friend, cannot you follow me in such petitions as these? You know my soul is going up for you and I am crying to God, "Speak, Lord!" And there are others here that you know of and who are dear to you who are even now wrestling in earnest with the angel of mercy and they are saying, "Speak, Lord!" Oh, what would your father give if he should hear that God had spoken to your soul? How would your mother leap for joy if she did but know that God had come to deal with you in a way of saving Grace! "Speak, Lord!" Let that be your prayer!

Then put it next, "Speak, Lord, to *me*! For if the Lord speaks in a sermon, it may be to another and then woe is me that I should be denied the priceless gift. I may be lying by Bethesda's pool, but another man may step in before me and I may miss the mercy. Speak, Lord, to me, even to *me*. Say unto my soul, 'I am your salvation.' May there be an unmistakable message to my heart. You have taken away one that I knew. It is a marvel, then, that You have not taken me away. It is a wonder that I am spared—such a rebel as I have been!

"O how great is Your patience that You have not dashed me in pieces and cast me into Hell! Lord, You have dealt graciously with me in sparing my life. Speak to me, Lord. If there are other souls in a like case with me,

deal graciously with them, but oh, do chiefly so with me, for if there is one heart that wants You more than another I am that one! If there is one less likely than another to be saved—one who would give You more praise than another if saved—I am that one! Lord, speak to me!”

Dear young friend, you need not go home to pray that prayer. While you are sitting there, I pray God the Holy Spirit to lead you to offer it in silence—“Lord, speak to me.” Personal possession of an interest in Christ Jesus is a blessing to be sought for with strong crying and tears—be not silent till the God of Heaven shall grant it to you. I will add another word to the prayer which I commend to you—it shall be the word of time. “Lord, speak to me *now*.” How old are you? Perhaps you are young. Oh, but how well it is to let the Savior have the bud of our being—to consecrate to Him the early morning of life!

Blessed is the day of life when it begins with clear shining and opens with a morning without clouds. “Lord, I am young, but not too young to die. Speak to me now!” But are there not some of you who are past your one-and-twenty and are beginning to run into the ways of sin? It may be your feet have slipped. Have you wandered into evil? Are you living in the daily practice of outward vice? You know you have left the right path, some of you, and the pangs of conscience are upon you just now. Pray—“Lord, let me have had the last of my sins! Let me have done with them *now*. Sever, once and for all, the bonds between me and Satan and bind me fast to Your altar tonight!”

Perhaps you have passed even the prime of life. It may be that your hairs are turning gray. An old sinner is an old fool. He who is out of Christ at sixty or seventy is devoid of understanding. The young *may* die, but the old *must*. To be careless in youth is to sleep in a siege. But to be worldly in old age is to sleep in an attack, when already the scaling ladders are at the walls! Take heed, you who wear gray hairs, for if they are not crowns of Glory to you, they will prove to be fools' caps! Woe unto you who have spent your threescore years and ten and are yet the enemies of God! What will you do when He comes to require of you that which is past?

O, what will you do in the day when He shall deal out to you who have followed the flesh, the corruption thereof? O, what will you do when the heavens are in a blaze and the trumpet rings and the dead awaken and you are judged? I put this question to you in deep solemnity this night. And do, I pray you, before you leave these walls, send up the cry, “Speak, Lord to me and speak to me NOW!”

But can you say, like Samuel, “Your servant hears”? Truly, I am afraid many of you cannot for you do not hear God's word with your hearts. My eye runs down with grief when I think of some of you who listen to my voice year after year and yet do not hear. You hear me, but you do not

hear my Master! Alas, how many have been the arrows out of God's bow which I have shot at you? Have they not been wasted? They have rattled upon your armor, but they have not pierced your *hearts*! I have run in vain! I have labored in vain for you! I have beaten the air so far as you are concerned. You would not hear. I can say solemnly I have sometimes stood in this pulpit and have labored with your souls to the best of my power and I have felt that I would have cheerfully resigned all I had on earth if I might but have brought you to Christ!

If you, my Hearers who sit here constantly, might but be partakers of eternal life, I will leave my Master to do what He wills with me. Shame, contempt, disgrace—these shall be our joy and our crown for our faithfulness to God and your souls. But, oh, I *must* have you saved! I must have you lay hold on eternal life! I must see you look to Jesus! And my prayer is that you may this night look to a Savior Crucified! Can you say, "Your servant hears"? "Yes," says one, "I can. If now the Lord would say a word in mercy to me I would gladly hear it." Then He will speak to you, poor Soul, before long. If you will hear it, He will say it, for He never did give a hearing ear to any heart without intending to speak to it.

I know how you want Him to speak—you want Him to speak with conviction. You want the broken and the contrite heart such as He will not despise. Well, ask for it—say, "Speak, Lord, with Your convicting voice, for I am ready to hear." And you want Him to speak with a converting voice—you desire to be turned from your evil ways and to follow the Lord. Cry to Him, then, "Speak, Lord, with the voice that turns men and turn me now from darkness to Light."

Or it may be that you want a comforting word. Well, then, pray for it—"Speak, Lord, with Your voice of comfort! Bind up my bleeding wounds and let my soul rejoice in You." Yet, truly, I do not know that He will speak anything more to you than this—"Look to Christ and live." He will speak with power, but that is the substance of it. Jesus is the sum of Mercy's message. He is the Word of God. Do not expect to have any other Gospel from God's lips than that which is revealed in God's Word. The Gospel of God's Word is, "Believe, and live." There is life in a look at the Crucified One! There is life at this moment for YOU! If you will not hear the voice of God when He says to you, "Trust Christ," remember He has no other glad tidings.

Effectual calling may speak this same thing more effectually, but the Holy Spirit never reveals any other Gospel. There is no other way to Heaven but just this—"Trust your soul to Christ—your sins are forgiven you and you are saved!" I am loath to leave this point because my heart is panting to know and to feel some inward emotion which might make me feel confident that some of you had breathed this prayer. O may the good

Master who alone can drive these nails home use the Gospel hammer now! I do entreat you, by the shortness of life, by the certainty of death, by the glories of Heaven, by the terrors of Hell—seek the Lord and let this be, now, the voice of your seeking, “Speak, Lord! Speak to ME! Speak NOW! For Your servant hears.”

III. We will turn to the third view of the text as the PRAYER OF AN EARNEST BELIEVER. I was led to select this text by finding it in the letter of one who has just been taken away from our classes and from our Church. She was about to change her position in life in some degree and the one prayer that seemed to be ever upon her mind was a prayer for guidance. She often prayed, “Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears.” She said she felt that God was about to do something for her, but she did not know what it was. She little dreamed that she was so near the kingdom and the Glory, but yet that was the prayer, “Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears.”

This is a very appropriate prayer for the Christian when he is in providential difficulty. You may not know what you ought to do tomorrow. Of two courses open to you, there may appear certain advantages connected with each and some friends have urged you to one plan and other friends have urged you to the other. Now if you have used your best judgment and have endeavored to direct your steps according to the Word of God, you may expect, in answer to prayer, to have a distinct directive from God. Not, perhaps, from the mouth of man, though that sometimes happens, for even from this pulpit cases which we never heard of have been unraveled and dilemmas with which the preacher was never acquainted have notwithstanding been solved by what seemed but a stray word, meant by God to be a finger, pointing out to His children—“This is the way, walk you in it.”

Take your difficulty to the God of Wisdom. Spread it out before Him, and having divested yourself of your own will in the matter—having solemnly desired to know the will of God and not your own wish—you may then expect by some means or other—and God has different ways of doing it—to have an answer from the Most High. Take this as your prayer, “Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears.” We want in our daily life more fully to acknowledge God in all our ways. We are, I am afraid, in this age, in great danger of forgetting God. We ought to acknowledge Him in the common transactions of the day, or else like the Israelites with the Gibeonites, we may be betrayed in the simplest transaction and deceived to our lasting injury.

Take your matters before the God of Abraham and the Urim and Thummim shall yet speak to you. *Domino dirige nos*, “Lord direct us,” is a good motto, not only for the City of London, but for the citizens of Heaven!

In points of doctrine this desire humbly uttered may bring us much light. God's Word is not all of it alike plain! Sometimes when you have heard conflicting views—this preacher earnestly declaring a doctrine and another denouncing it—you may be somewhat nonplussed. My advice to you is take your difficulty before God in prayer and say, "Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears."

Do not ask God to confirm *your* opinion, but ask Him to make your opinion conformable with His Truth. Do not go to God's Word to find texts to support *your* tenets, but go to Scripture for texts and tenets, too. Remember that to a true Christian no doctrine has any force upon the conscience, except as it comes with, "thus says the Lord." Follow the simple Word of God as you find it and rest assured you shall have the Light of the Holy Spirit streaming upon the sacred page. And as you read it you shall hear the Master say, "This is My Word." He shall make it come to your soul with such power that you shall have no doubt about it if your heart cries, "Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears."

The same course should be adopted by every Christian in matters of practice. I am afraid there are many Christians who have stopped their ears up. They may not hear the teaching of portions of the Word. There are certain Scriptures which they can never abide. I have heard of one who never would read the eighth or ninth chapter of Romans at family prayer. I have heard of another who invariably omitted that chapter in Acts about the Ethiopian eunuch—a very awkward chapter, I confess, for anyone to read who has not accepted Believer's Baptism.

You will find many professed Christians in these day's who do not like to meddle with certain questions because they are more than half afraid that a little examination would prove them to be in the wrong. They cannot bear us to put a finger upon their Prayer Book, their creed, or their Church for they know that they will not bear a close inspection. They will say, "Well, there are faults everywhere, let well enough alone." But the fact is that they do not care what the Truth of God is so long as they can be comfortable and go with the fashion of the day.

Some whom we gladly hope to be true Christians think Truth unimportant and are not prepared to "search the Scriptures whether these things are so or not." Brethren, I would be afraid of my own doctrine if I dared not test it both by Scripture and sound argument. If my foundation would not stand a good shaking, I would be afraid that it was not made of very solid material. Some people cry out if we say a word about their Church. It is a sign that their Church is hardly strong enough to endure an honest encounter. Pasteboard and tinsel always pray for peace and charity, but solid metal fears not the day of battle!

Be it ours to court the sunlight and above all let us beseech the Lord our God to be our light, for in His Light we shall see light. Sitting at the feet of Jesus is our position! To receive of His Words is our sweet employ! As melted wax is fitted to receive the impression of the seal, so let us be ready to accept the Master's teaching. Let His faintest Word bind us as with bonds of steel. And let his minutest Precept be precious as the gold of Ophir. "To obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams." Let it be our chosen privilege to be taught of the Lord and to maintain His Truth. Here, in this House of Prayer, let us offer the petition, "Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears."

As for matters of duty—again, be ever ready to follow the Master and Him alone. Not Luther, nor Calvin, neither Wesley, nor Whitfield is to be your Rabbi. Jesus alone is Master in the kingdom of Heaven! Whatever he says to you, do it! But where you have not His warrant, let no traditions or ancient customs make you stir so much as a single inch.

IV. We will close by observing that our text seems to us rightly to express THE SPIRIT OF A DEPARTING CHRISTIAN, There he lies upon the bed—his pulse grows fainter. The many pains of death afflict him. His eyes are beginning to glaze, but a brighter light than that of earth has dawned upon him! And while the outward man decays, the inward man begins to renew his youth. I think I see him when his pains are worst. He desires to go, but he is willing to remain as long as his Master wills. He says sometimes, "I ill can brook delay," but the next moment he checks himself and he says, "Not my will, but Yours be done."

He sits patiently upon the river's bank, expecting that his Master shall open the passage for him to pass over dry shod. He is praying, "Speak, Lord and the sooner You will speak the more shall I rejoice. Say unto me, 'Come up here.' Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears"—hears now better and more distinctly than he ever did hear before! He is now nearer to You. The ear is almost closed to the din and bustle of the world, while in secret silence of the mind it waits the still small voice of Your lips. Speak, Lord and say, "Plunge into the river," and I will cheerfully do so if You will but come and meet me. "Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears."

I think I hear that Divine and mysterious voice, which, in fact, none can hear but those whose day of Glory is dawning. The messenger has come and whispered in the ear of the dying saint and I pray you, mark his joy for you may see it! Its light illuminates the countenance. The eye sparkles with supernatural Glory. "Now," says the man of God, "my journey is over and I am almost Home." "Now," says the expiring Sister, "it is victory, glory, triumph! The white horse is at the door—my Master bids me mount and ride in triumph, following my Lord Jesus and all the conquering ones. The Master is come in His garments of salvation and calls for me!"

The physician says he could see the death-change and the nurse bears the same witness, but the well-instructed Believer calls it the *life-change* and reads the true meaning of the mysterious transformation. He sees a something which is a prediction of the coming Glory! He marks those beaming eyes and that celestial smile. Now strange words drop from the lips—sometimes words that are scarcely lawful for a man to utter, by reason of the high and awful Glory of their meaning. Now come the shouts of victory over death—now the note of defiance of the grave! The soul has left all care, all doubt, all fear behind! Its foot is not only on the Rock of Ages, but on that part of the rock which is on the other side of Jordan. And the soul cries with transport, “I am with Him! Another moment I shall be in His arms! I see Him! The angelic chariots wait for *me*—I step into them and I ride to the kingdom! Victory, victory, victory, through the blood of the Lamb!”

Something like this was the departing scene of our beloved Sister who has gone Home this week and something like this, I trust, will be your departure and mine. But it will not, it cannot be thus with us unless we are resting upon Christ—

***“None but Jesus—none but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.”***

Lo! These fifteen years have I been preaching Jesus' name and preaching nothing but His name and it has a savor about it sweeter than ever! And if I had but one word more to speak, I think this should be it—none but Jesus, none but Jesus!

Oh, fly to Him if you would have a blessed death and a glorious resurrection! Look out of yourselves away from your frames and your feelings! Look away from ceremonies, from priests and from all men! Look only to the bleeding wounds of my Master! Trust Jesus expiring on the Cross and trust in Him alone! You shall find eternal happiness in Him! The Lord bless you with His richest blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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THE FORM AND SPIRIT OF RELIGION

NO. 186

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 4, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it comes among us it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.”
1 Samuel 4:3.***

THESE men made a great mistake—what they needed was the *Lord* in their midst. Whereas they imagined that the *symbol* of God’s presence, the ark of the covenant, would be sufficient to bestow upon them the assistance which they required in the day of battle. As is man, such must his religion be. Now, man is a compound being. To speak correctly, man is a spiritual being. He has within him a soul, a substance far beyond the bounds of matter. But man is also made up of a body as well as a soul. He is not pure spirit—his spirit is incarnate in flesh and blood. Now, such is our religion. The religion of God is, as to its vitality, purely spiritual—always so. But since man is made of flesh as well as of spirit, it seemed necessary that his religion should have something of the outward, external and material in which to embody the spiritual, or else man would not have been able to lay hold upon it.

This was especially the case under the old dispensation. The religion of the Jew is really a heavenly and spiritual thing—a thing of thought, a thing that concerns the mind and spirit. But the Jew was untaught, he was but a babe, unable to understand spiritual things unless he saw them pictured out to him, or (to repeat what I have just said) unless he saw them embodied in some outward type and symbol—and therefore God was pleased to give the Jew a great number of ceremonies which were to his religion what the body is to man’s soul. The Jewish religion taught the doctrine of the atonement, but the Jew could not understand it and therefore God gave him a lamb to be slain every morning and every evening and he gave him a goat over which the sins of the people were to be confessed and which was to be driven into the depths of the wilderness to show the great doctrine of a substitute and atonement through Christ.

The Jewish religion teaches, as one of its prominent doctrines, the unity of the Godhead. But the Jew was ever apt to forget that there was but one God. And God, to teach him that, would have but one temple and but one altar upon which the sacrifice might rightly be offered. So that the idea of the one God was (as I have already said) made incarnate in the fact that there was but one temple, but one altar and but one great high priest. And mark, this is true of our religion—Christianity—not true to so full an extent as of Judaism—for the religion of the Jew had a gross and

heavy body—but our religion has a body transparent and having but little of materialism in it.

If you ask me what I would call the materialism of our religion—the embodiment of the spiritual part of that in which we trust and hope—I would point, first of all to the two ordinances of the Lord, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. I would point you next to the services of God's house, to the Sabbath-Day, to the outward ritual of our worship. I would point you to our solemn songs, to our sacred service of prayer. And I would point you also—and I think I am right in so doing—to the form of sound words which we ever desire to hold fast and firm as containing that creed which it is necessary for men to believe if they would hold the truth as it is in Jesus.

Our religion, then, has an outward form even to this day. For the Apostle Paul, when he spoke of professing Christians, spoke of some who had "a form of godliness, but denied the power thereof." That it is still true, though I confess not to the same extent as it was in the days of Moses—that religion must have a body that the spiritual thing may come out palpably before our vision and that we may see it.

Now, three points this morning inferred from our narrative. The first point is this—that *the outward form of religion is to be carefully and reverently observed*. But my second and most important head is this—you will notice that *the very men who have the least of the spirit of religion are the most superstitiously observant of the form of it*. Just as you find the people here who did not care for God had a very superstitious regard for that chest called the ark of the covenant. And then, my third point will be that *those who trust in the outward form of religion, apart from the spirit of it, are fearfully deceived and the result of their deception must be of the most fatal character*. The first point I feel is necessary, lest I should lead any to despise the form of religion while endeavoring to insist upon the absolute necessity of attending in the first place to the spirit of it.

I. In the first place then, THE FORM OF RELIGION IS TO BE REVERENTLY OBSERVED. This ark of the covenant was with the Jew the most sacred instrument of his religion. There were many other things which he held holy. But this ark always stood in the most holy place and it was rendered doubly sacred, because between the outstretched wings of those cherubic figures that rested upon the mercy seat there was usually to be seen a bright light, called the Shekinah, which manifested that Jehovah, the God of Israel, who dwelt between the cherubim, was there.

And, indeed, they had great reason in the days of Samuel to reverence this ark, for you will recollect that when Moses went to war with the Midianites, a great slaughter of that people was occasioned by the fact that Eleazar, the high priest, with a silver trumpet, stood in the forefront of the battle, bearing in his hands the holy instrument of the Law—that is, the ark and it was by the presence of this ark that the victory was achieved. It was by this ark, too, that the river Jordan was dried up.

When the tribes came to it, there was no ford, but the priests put the staves of the ark upon their shoulders and they marched with solemn

pace down to the waters' edge and before the presence of the ark the waters receded, so that the people went through dry-shod. And when they had landed in the promised country, you remember it was by this ark that the walls of Jericho fell flat to the ground. For the priests, blowing the trumpets and carrying the ark, went before, when they compassed the city seven days and at last, by the power of the ark, or rather by the power of that God who dwelt within the ark, the walls of Jericho fell flat down and every man went straight up to the slaughter.

These people, therefore, thought if they could once get the ark, it would be all right and they would be sure to triumph. And while I shall have in the second head, to insist upon it that they were wrong in superstitiously imputing strength to the poor chest, yet the ark was to be reverently observed, for it was the outward symbol of a high spiritual truth and it was never to be treated with any indignity.

It is quite certain, in the first place, that *the form of religion must never be altered*. You remember that this ark was made by Moses, according to the pattern that God had given him in the mount. Now, the outward forms of our religion, if they are correct, are made by God. His two great ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are sent for us from on high. I dare not alter either of them. I should think it a high sin and treason against Heaven if, believing that Baptism signifies immersion and immersion only, I should pretend to administer it by sprinkling—or, believing that Baptism pertains to Believers only, I should consider myself a criminal in the sight of God if I should give it to any but those who believe.

Even so with the Lord's Supper. Believing that it consists of bread and wine, I hold it to be highly blasphemous in the Church of Rome to withhold the cup from the people. And knowing that this ordinance was intended for the Lord's people only, I consider it an act of high treason against the Majesty of Heaven when any are admitted to the Lord's Supper who have not made a profession of their faith and of their repentance and who do not declare themselves to be the true children of God.

And with regard to the doctrines of the Gospel, no alteration must be allowed here. I know that forms of doctrine are very little compared with the spirit and the heart. But still we must not alter even the form of it. It has often been said that we ought not to have a strict religion. I believe that is just the very thing we ought to have—a religion that is of such a cast that it does not know how to alter. A religion that comes from the Infallible Head of the Church, that is, Jesus Christ our Lord, and which to the latest time is to be like the Law and the Prophets—not one jot or tittle of it must fail while the earth endures.

The men who think that we may alter this and alter that and still maintain the spirit of religion, have some truth on their side. But let them remember that while the spirit of religion may be maintained in the midst of many errors, yet every error tends to weaken our spirituality. And, beside that, we have no right to consider the effect upon ourselves merely. Whatever form of religion God has ordained, it is ours to practice without the slightest alteration. And to alter any one of the ordinances of God is an act

of dire profanation. However reasonable that alteration may seem to be, it is treason against high Heaven and is not to be permitted in the Church of Christ.

“Hold fast the form of sound words,” said Paul, “which you have heard of me.” Or, as I remember to have said before, while the form of religion is not power, yet unless the form is carefully observed, it is not easy to maintain the power. It is like an egg-shell enclosing the egg. There is no life in the shell, but you must take care you do not crack it, or else you may destroy the life within. The ordinances and doctrines of our faith are only the shell of religion—they are not the life. But we must take care that we do not hurt so much as the outward shell, for if we do, we may endanger the life within—though it may manage to live, it would be weakened by any injury done to the outward form thereof.

And as the form must not be altered, so *it must not be despised*. These Philistines despised the ark. They took it and set it in their idol temple and the result was that their idol god, Dagon, was broken in pieces. They then sent it through their cities and they were smitten with tumors. And then, being afraid to put it within walls, they set it in the open country and they were invaded with mice, so that everything was eaten up. God would not have any dishonor put even upon the outward form of His religion. He would have men reverently take care that they did no dishonor even to His ark—it might be nothing but gopher-wood but because God had dwelt between the wings of those cherubim, the ark was to be held sacred and God would not have it dishonored.

Take care, you that despise God, lest you despise His outward ordinances. To laugh at the Sabbath, to despise the ordinances of God’s House, to neglect the means of grace, to call the outward form of religion a vain thing—all this is highly offensive in the sight of God. He will have us remember that while the form is not the life, yet the form is to be respected for the sake of the life which it contains. The body is to be venerated for the sake of the inward soul. And, as I would have no man maim my body—even though in maiming it he might not be able to wound my soul—so God would have no man maim the outward parts of religion, although it is true no man can touch the real vitality of it.

Yet one more remark and that a very solemn one. As the outward form is neither to be altered nor despised so neither is it to be *intruded upon by unworthy persons*. You remember that this ark of the covenant, after it was brought back from the land of the Philistines, was set in the field of Joshua the Bethshemite and the Bethshemites took off the lid and looked into the ark of the Lord and, for this, the Lord “smote of that people fifty-thousand and three-score and ten men. And the people lamented because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter.”

These Bethshemites had no intention whatever of dishonoring the ark. They had a vain curiosity to look within and the sight of those marvelous tables of stone struck them with death. For the Law, when it is not covered by the mercy seat, is death to any man and it was death to them. Now you will easily remember how very solemn a penalty is attached to

any man's intruding into the outward form of religion when he is not called to do so. Let me quote this awful passage—"He" (speaking of the Lord's Supper) "that eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

How frightful an announcement is that! A curse is pronounced upon the man who dares to touch even the outward form of religion unless he has the power of it. And we know there is nothing which excites God's holy anger more swiftly than a man's attending to the ordinances of His house and making an outward profession of being in Christ, while he has no part nor lot in the matter. Oh, take heed! The outward ordinances of Christ are not the vitality of religion, but nevertheless they are so solemnly important that we must neither alter nor despise them, nor rush into them without being invited. For if we do so, the curse of God must light upon us for having despised the holy thing of the Most High God of Israel.

And now, before I close this first head, let me remark that *the outward things of God are to be diligently cared for and loved*. We have in our reading had two instances of that. There was holy Eli—he knew very well that the ark of God was not God. He understood that it was but the outward sign of the inward and spiritual. Yet when the ark of God was taken, mark the poor old man's trouble—his heart broke and then he fell down and broke his neck.

Then there was that nameless woman. Her husband was the priest who attended to this very ark, but he was a man whose character I cannot describe better than by saying that he was a son of Belial. It is hard for a woman to believe religion if she has a minister for her husband who is profane and wicked. This woman's husband not only committed wrongs against God, but against her. He was a filthy and unclean person who polluted the very courts of the Lord's house with his fornications. And yet she had such faith in her God that she knew how to love the religion which her husband, by his awful character, brought into disrepute.

She knew how to distinguish between the man and his duty, between the priest and the priesthood, between the officer and the office. I do wonder at her. I am sure there is nothing that staggers our faith like seeing a minister walking inconsistently. But this man was the chief minister and her own husband, living in known sin and a sin which came home to her, because he sinned against her. I am sure it was wonderful that she believed at all. But so strong was her faith and attachment to her religion, that though, like Eli, she knew that the ark was not God, that the form was not the inward thing, yet the form itself was so precious to her, that the pangs of child-birth were hurried on prematurely and in the midst of her pain, this still was uppermost—that the ark of the Lord was taken.

It was in vain to cheer her with the news that her child was born. It was an idle tale to her and she rejoiced not in it. She lay in a swoon. But at last, opening her eyes and remembering that her husband was dead and that therefore, according to Jewish usage, it was her duty to give the child a name, she faintly opened her lips before she died and said, "Call his

name Inglorious (Ichabod) for the glory is departed.” And then she added this reason for it—she did not say, “because my husband is dead,” though she loved him. She did not say, “because my father-in-Law, Eli, is dead,” or “because my nation has been defeated,” but she added that all-significant reason, “because the ark of the Lord was taken.”

And she died. Oh, I would to God that we all loved God’s house and loved the ways of God and the ordinances of God as much as she did. While we attach no superstitious importance to the outward ceremony, I wish we thought as much of holy things, because of the Holy One of Israel, as did Eli and this nameless, but noble woman.

Thus I have preached upon the first head and no ceremonialist here I am sure, can differ from me, for they must all say it is true. Even the Puseyite will confess that this is just what he believes—that ceremonies ought to be carefully observed. But I shall not agree with Mr. Puseyite in the second head.

II. Now, it is a notorious fact that THE VERY MEN WHO HAVE THE LEAST IDEA OF WHAT SPIRITUAL RELIGION IS, ARE THE MEN WHO PAY THE MOST SUPERSTITIOUS ATTENTION TO OUTWARD FORMS. We refer you again to this instance. These people would neither repent, nor pray, nor seek God and His Prophets. Yet they sought out this ark and trusted in it with superstitious veneration. Now, in every country where there has been any religion at all that is true, the great fact has come out very plainly that the people who don’t know anything about true religion have always been the most careful about the forms.

Do you want to know the man who used to swallow widows’ houses and devour the patrimonies of the fatherless? Do you want to know the hypocrites, the deceivers in the days of Christ? Why, they were the Pharisees, who “for a show made long prayers.” They were the men who gave alms to the poor in the corners of the street—the men that tithed the anise and the mint and the cummin and forgot the weightier matters of the Law, such as justice and righteousness. If you wanted to find the seducer, the unjust judge, the liar, the perjured man in the days of Christ—you had only to ask for the man who had fasted thrice in the week and gave tithes of all he possessed.

These Pharisees would do any wicked action and never stick at it. Yet, if in drinking wine a small gnat should have fallen in and been swallowed with it they would consider themselves defiled, because their Law did not allow them eat a creature from which the blood had not been withdrawn. Thus they strained at the gnat, thus getting the reputation of being very religious and swallowed the camel, hump and all. You smile. But what they did in their day is done now. You know the Romanists—did you ever know one of them who could not think it to be a very high offense against the Majesty of Heaven, if he were to eat any meat on Good Friday? Do you know any one of them who did not think it necessary to keep Lent with strict punctilious observance?

Notice how carefully they go to their places of worship on the Sabbath morning. How diligently they observe that sacred rite of crossing their

foreheads with holy water. How necessary it is, that the holy water and everything else of the same kind should be tenderly cared for. And do not the same persons in their own countries keep their theatres open on the Sabbath? Do you not find the very men who are so solemnly observant of their religion in the morning, forgetting it all in the evening, thinking no more of the Sabbath, which they call holy, than if it were any other day, but making it more a day of merriment than any day of the week?

Look again at our Church of England. God be thanked that there are so many true Evangelical men in the midst of it. But there are certain sections to whom my remarks will apply. Do you want to know the men who know nothing at all about the new birth, who do not know what it is to be justified by faith, who have not a spark of religion? Do you know where to find them? They are the men that never said their creed without turning their heads the right way, that never said the name of Jesus without bowing their heads most reverently. They are the men who always take care that the Church should be built so as to be a goodly edifice, in order that the parishioners going there may see the glory of God in the glory of His house—they are the people who mark every red letter day, who take care that every rubric is attended to, who think that holly on Christmas is a most heavenly thing and a few flowers upon the altar almost equal to the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon.

These are the gentlemen who could no more preach without a cassock than they could live without a head. Of course they have not any religion at all and because the inner life is clean gone, evaporated, dissipated they have to be so extremely particular that they observe the outward form of it. I know many Evangelical Churchmen (and they are generally precise enough) that would break through every form.

I could point you out this morning some two or three clergymen of the Church of England who are heretical enough to be sitting here and listening to the words of one who is a Dissenter and of course a Schismatic—but who would no more think of calling me a Schismatic than they would think of flying and would give me the right hand of fellowship with all their hearts. I believe that many of them would forget the rubrics if they could and if it were in their power, would cut their catechism all to pieces and turn half of their Church Prayer Book out of doors. And these are the men that have most religion. They care least about the form but they have most of the grace within. They have more true religion, more evangelism, more of the grace of God in their hearts, than fifty of their Puseyite Brethren.

But let me come to Dissenters, for we are just as bad. I must deal with all alike. We have among us a certain class of people, a sort of dissenting Puseyites. Where the Puseyite thinks it necessary to keep Good Friday and Easter Sunday, these good Brethren take as much care to keep holy day the wrong way, as the others the right way. They think it would be a grievous sin to go to Chapel on Good Friday and they are solemnly in earnest that they should never break the Law of the Church not to observe holy days. To them it is a very sacred thing that they should always be

found in their Chapel twice on the Sunday. They think it highly necessary that they should have their children baptized, or that they should be baptized themselves and that they should take the Lord's Supper.

That is all well and good. But alas! We must confess it, there are some among us who, if they are orthodox in their opinions and precise in their outward practice, are quite content to be utterly destitute of the power of religion. I must deal faithfully with all. I know in all our dissenting denominations there are to be found many self-righteous persons who have not any religion at all, but who are the most precise people in all the world to stick up for the outward form of it. Do you not know some old member of the Church here and there? Well, you say, if anybody in the Church is a hypocrite, I should say that old So-and-So is one. If you were to propose any alteration in anything, oh, how these gentlemen would bristle up, how they would draw their swords!

They love every nail in the Chapel door—they would not have a different color for the pulpit for the world. They will have everything strictly observed. Their whole salvation seems to depend upon the rightness of the form. Oh no! Not they. They could not think of altering any of the forms of their Church. You know it is quite as easy for a man to trust in ceremonies, when they are severely simple, as for a man to rely upon them when they are gorgeous and superb. A man may as much trust in the simple ordinance of immersion and the breaking of bread, as another may trust in the high mass and in the prayers of priests. We may have Rome in Dissent and Rome in the Church of England and Rome anywhere. For wherever there is a trust in ceremonies, there is the essence of Popery—there is anti-Christ and the man of sin.

Oh, take heed of this any of you who have been relying upon your ceremonies! This is the truth—the more zeal for ceremonies, generally the less power of vital godliness within. But now, how is it that the man who would not eat anything but fish on Good Friday, cheats his neighbor on Saturday? How is it that the man who never would by any means go to anything but an orthodox sixteen-ounces-to-the-pound Baptist Chapel, can be found committing acts of injustice in his daily business and perhaps more filthy deeds still? I will tell you—the man feels he must have some righteousness or other—and when he knows himself to be a good-for-nothing rascal, he feels he has not got a moral righteousness and therefore he tries to get a ceremonial one.

Mark the man that drinks and swears, that commits all kinds of iniquity and you will very often find him (I have known such cases) the most superstitiously reverent man that can be found. He would not go inside a place of worship without taking his hat off immediately. He will curse and swear outside, perhaps—and it never pricks his conscience. But to walk up the aisle of a Church with his hat on—oh, how frightful! He feels if he did so, he would be lost forever. He would not forget to tithe the mint, anise and cummin, but all the while the weightier matters of the Law are left totally unregarded.

Another reason is because a religion of ceremonies is so much easier than true religion. To say *Ave Marias and Pater Nosters* is easy enough. You may soon get it over and it does not check the conscience much. To go to Chapel twice on the Sunday—there is nothing very hard in that. It is not half so hard as turning to the Lord with full purpose of heart. It is not half so hard as breaking off one's sin by righteousness and putting one's trust in Christ Jesus alone. Therefore, because the thing is so easy, people like it better.

Again—it is so complimentary. When the Romanist beats his back and flogs his flesh, why is it that he likes that better than the simple Gospel, “Believe and live?” Why, because it just flatters his pride. He thinks he is beating the devil out of himself, but he is in reality beating him in—the devil of pride is coming in. He whispers, “Ah, you are a good man to have flogged yourself like that! You will carry yourself to Heaven by the merit of your wounds and bruises.” Poor human nature always likes that. In fact, the more exacting a religion is, the better people like it. The more religion ties you up and binds you, if it does not touch the heart, the better people like to carry it out.

Hinduism has its great hold upon the people because they can get a great stock of merit by walking with spikes in their shoes. Or rolling themselves many thousands of miles, or drinking the filthy waters of the Ganges, or offering themselves to die. All these things please human nature. “Believe and live” is too humbling. To trust alone in Christ casts down man's high looks—therefore man says, “Away with it!” And he turns to anything rather than to Christ.

There is another reason. Men always like the religion of ceremonies because it does not need the giving up of their favorite sins. “Why,” says a man “if all that is needed for me to be saved is to have the Sacrament given me by the priest when I come to die, what a delightful religion that is! I can drink, swear and do just as I like. I have nothing to do but to get greased at last with holy oil and off I go to Heaven with all my sins about me.” Says another, “We can have all our gaities and frivolities, all the pomp of life and the pride of flesh. All that we need is to get confirmed. Then, afterwards, sometimes go to Church, take a handsomely bound prayer-book and Bible, be very attentive and observant and the bishop will no doubt set us all right.”

This suits many men because there is no trouble about it. They can keep on with their gaities and with their sins and yet they believe they can go to Heaven with them. Men do not like that old fashioned Gospel which tells them that sin and the sinner must part, or else they must be damned, They do not like to be told that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. That old-fashioned text, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” will never be palatable to human nature. Human nature does not mind what you tell it to do, so long as you do not tell it to *believe*. You may tell it to observe this, that, and the other, and the man will do it and thank you and the harder it is, the better he will like you. But once tell him, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sin-

ners. Believe on Him and you shall be saved,” his pride is all up at once. He cannot endure it and he hates the man that preaches it to him and drives the very thought of the Gospel from his soul.

III. And now, in the last place, it is mine to warn you that TO TRUST IN CEREMONIES IS A MOST DECEITFUL THING and WILL END IN THE MOST TERRIFIC CONSEQUENCES. When these people had got the ark into the camp they shouted for joy because they thought themselves quite safe. But, alas, they met with a greater defeat than before. Only four thousand men had been killed in the first battle, but in the second, thirty thousand footmen of Israel fell down dead. How vain are the hopes that men build upon their good works and ceremonial observances! How frightful is that delusion which teaches for the Gospel a thing which is not “the Gospel.” It is a thing that would pervert the Gospel of Christ. My Hearer, let me ask you solemnly—what is your ground of hope? Do you rely on Baptism? O man, how foolish are you! What can a few drops of water, put upon an infant’s forehead, do? Some lying hypocrites tell us that children are regenerated by drops of water. What kind of regeneration is that?

We have seen people hanged that were regenerated in this fashion. There have been men that have lived all their lives whoremongers, adulterers, thieves and murderers who have been regenerated in their Baptism by that kind of regeneration. Oh, be not deceived by a regeneration so absurd, so palpable even to flesh and blood, as one of the lying wonders that have come from Hell itself. But maybe you say, “Sir, I rely upon my Baptism, in after life.” Ah, my Friends, what can washing in water do? As the Lord lives, if you trust in Baptism you trust in a thing that will fail you at last.

For what is washing in water unless it is preceded by faith and repentance? We baptize you, not in order to wash away your sins, but because we believe they are washed away *beforehand*. And if we did not think you believed so, we would not admit you to a participation in that ordinance. But if you will pervert this to your own destruction, by trusting in it, take heed. You are warned this morning. For as “circumcision avails nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature,” so Baptism avails nothing.

I may have some here who are saying within themselves, “Well, if I do not go to Heaven, nobody will, for I have been brought up to my Church as regularly as possible. I was regularly confirmed—my godfathers and godmothers stood for me in my childhood and all after the right fashion. I have come here, it is true, but it is about the first offense I ever committed, coming into this schismatic meeting. If it please God to forgive, I will never do so again. I always go to Church and I have no doubt that by taking the Sacrament and saying my prayers I shall go to Heaven.”

Ah, you are awfully deceived, for unless you are born again you must come back to the old standard after all—unless you are in blessed union with the Lamb, unless you have found repentance for sin, unless you have true living faith in the Lord Jesus—you may keep all these things, you may observe every jot and tittle—but the gates of Heaven must be shut in

your face and, “depart from me, I never knew you,” must be your doom, even though you reply, “You have eaten and drunk in our streets and we have listened to Your voice.” No, my Friends, be you Presbyterians, Episcopalians, or Dissenters, it matters not—you have your ceremonies. And there are some among us that rely upon them. This one truth cuts at the root of us all. If this is our hope, it is a foul delusion. We must have faith in Jesus, we must have the new heart and the right spirit. No outward forms can make us clean. The leprosy lies deep within. And unless there is an inward work, no outward work can ever satisfy God and give us an entrance into Paradise.

But before I close, there is one thing I want you to notice and that is that *this ark not only could not give victory to Israel but it could not preserve the lives of the priests themselves who carried it.* This is a fatal blow to all who trust in the forms of religion. What would the Romanist think if I should tell him that his outward forms can never save him? And how would he grind his teeth if I were to tell him as I do, that the outward forms can never save his priest, for his priest and he must be lost together unless they have some better trust than this?

But we have even in Protestant Churches, too, much priestcraft. People say, “Well, if the Gospel does not save me, I am confident of the salvation of my minister.” Rest assured that he that serves at God’s altar is no more secure from destruction, unless *he* has a living faith in Christ, than you yourselves. Hophni and Phinehas are slain and so must every priest be if he relies on ceremonies Himself or teaches others to do so. I cannot imagine a more frightful deathbed than that of a man who has been a priest—I mean a man who has taught others to trust in ceremonies. When he is buried, it will be said of him that he died in sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection.

But oh, the moment after death, when he opens his eye to see his delusion! While he was on earth he was fool enough to think that drops of water could save him, that a piece of bread and a cup of wine could renew his heart and save his soul. But when he gets into another world he will lose this folly and then will the thought flash upon him, like a lightning flash, writhing his soul with misery—“Ah, I am destitute of the One thing needful. I had no love to Christ, I never had that repentance which needed not to be repented of. I never fled to Jesus and now I know that that hymn is true—

**‘Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
Can raise the soul to Heaven.’ ”**

Oh, how frightful then afterwards to meet his parishioners, to see those to whom he has preached and to be howled at through the pit by the men whom he was the instrument of destroying by telling them to trust in a rotten foundation. Let me free myself from any such fear as that. As the Lord my God lives before whom I stand this day—man, woman, my Brother, my Sister, in the race of Adam, if you rely on anything short of

the blood of Jesus Christ, you trust in a lie. And if your salvation ends in anything short of a thorough change of heart, if it makes you anything less than a new creature in Christ Jesus, the bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself upon it. You have a religion which is not equal to the necessities of your case and when you need it most it will reel beneath your feet and leave you without a standing place whereon to rest, overwhelmed with dismay and overcome by despair.

Now, before I send you away, let me make this last remark. I hear one say, "Sir, I renounce all trust in good works and ceremonies. Tell me, how I can be saved." The way is simply this. Our sins deserve punishment. God must and will punish sin. Jesus Christ came into this world and was punished in the place and stead of all that believe on Him. Your business, then, this morning, is to make this inquiry, Do I want a Savior? Do I feel that I want Him? And my business, if you answer that question right is to say, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart and you shall be saved.

Ah, there is one in Heaven today, I firmly believe, who was always a worshipper in this place and at New Park Street—a young man who was led here to listen to the Gospel and was converted to God. Last Sabbath morning he was caught away to Heaven in the burning house at Bloomsbury—one of those young men who was taken out of the ruins, one who had been brought to a knowledge of the Truth here. It is stated in some of the papers that his mother was far from a religious woman and was somewhat given to drink.

He had to struggle with some temptation and opposition but he was enabled to hold on his way and then, in such an hour as he thought not, the Son of Man came for him and caught him to Himself in the midst of flames and crashing timbers and the uprising of smoke. Oh, I may have one here that, before another Sabbath morning comes, may be launched into eternity—if not by the same deplorable process—yet in as hasty a manner. And as my soul rejoices over that young man to think that God should have honored me in bringing him to Christ before He took him up to Heaven, I must lament that there are many of you in a peril so frightful as to be living without God, without Christ, without a hope of Heaven. To have death hanging over you and yet not to tremble at it.

Oh, this morning I beseech you—close with Christ. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, while His wrath is kindled but a little—for blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." By His grace may it be so! Amen. Amen.

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“IS GOD IN THE CAMP?”

NO. 2239

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*“And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp.
And they said, Woe unto us! For there has not been such a thing before”
1 Samuel 4:7.*

ISRAEL was out of gear with God. The people had forgotten the Most High and had gone aside to the worship of Baal. They had neglected the things of God and, therefore, they were given up to their enemies. When Jehovah had brought them out of Egypt, He instructed them how they were to live in the land to which He would bring them, and warned them that if they forsook Him, they would be chastened. His words were very plain—“If you will not, for all this, hearken unto Me, but walk contrary unto Me; then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.” In fulfillment of this threat, the Philistines had been Divinely permitted to make great havoc of the idolatrous Israelites and to hold them in cruel slavery.

The only way for them to get out of their trouble was to return to God, who, by His judgments, seemed to say, “Hear you the rod, and who has appointed it.” The only cure for their hurt was to go back with repentance and renew their faith and their covenant with God. Then all would have been right. But this is the last thing that men will do! Our minds, by nature, love not spiritual things. We will attend to any outward duty, or to any external rite—but to bring our hearts into subjection to the Divine will, to bow our minds to the Most High and to serve the Lord our God with all our heart and all our soul—the natural man abhors! Yet nothing less than this will suffice to turn our captivity.

Instead of attempting to get right with God, these Israelites set about devising superstitious means of securing the victory over their foes. In this respect, most of us have imitated them. We think of a thousand inventions, but we neglect the one thing necessary. I may be addressing some who, at this time, are passing through sore trials and who, therefore, think that they must have forgotten some little thing in connection with external religion, instead of seeing that it matters little what outward observance they may neglect, so long as they do not possess the faith, without which, it is impossible to please God! They forgot the main matter, which is to enthrone God in the life and to seek to do His will by faith in Christ Jesus. Get right with God! Confess your sin! Believe in Jesus Christ, the appointed Savior! Be reconciled to God by the death of His

Son—then all will be right between you and the Father in Heaven. We cannot bring men to this, apart from the Spirit of God.

In this sermon I shall have to show you how often and in how many ways men seek other methods of cure than the only one, namely, to take the case to God. They heal their hurt slightly. They cry, “Peace! Peace!” where there is no peace, and adopt a thousand devious devices rather than accept the only remedy provided by the Great Physician for sin-sick souls. Instead of seeking to become right with God, these Israelites thought that if they could get the Ark of the Covenant, which had been the symbol of Jehovah’s Presence, and bring it from the tent of Shiloh into the midst of their camp, they would then be certain of victory. So they sent and fetched the Ark—and when it came into the camp, they were enthusiastic as if their banners already waved over a victorious host! They lifted up their voices so loudly that the earth rang, again, with their shouts, while the Philistines, hearing their exulting shout and finding out the reason, were greatly afraid. With fearful hearts and trembling lips, already counting that all was lost, their enemies turned to one another and said, “God has come into the camp. Woe unto us! For there has not been such a thing before.”

In considering this subject, we will think, first, of *the great mistake* which both Israel and the Philistines made. In the second place, we will consider *the great truth* of which their mistake was a caricature. God *does* come into the camp when His people go forth to fight in His name. And when He really comes, the tide of battle is turned. When I have spoken on these two things, I shall close, as God shall help me, by speaking upon *the great lessons* which lie almost upon the very surface of the narrative.

I. First, then, let us consider THE GREAT MISTAKE which both the Israelites and Philistines made. The Israelites, instead of seeing to God, Himself, went to Shiloh to fetch the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was the sacred place where God revealed Himself in the days when His people truly served Him. But it was devoid of power without the Presence of Him who dwelt between the cherubim. The Israelites were mistaken, for they shouted long before they were “out of the woods.” Before they had won any victory, the sight of the Ark made them boastful and confident. The Philistines fell into an error of a different kind, for they were frightened without any real cause. They said, “God has come into the camp,” whereas God had not come at all! It was only the Ark with the cherubim on it—God was not there.

The mistake they made was just this—they *mistook the visible for the invisible*. It has pleased God, even in our holy faith, to give us some external symbols—water, bread and wine. They are so simple that it seems, at first sight, as if men could never have made them objects of worship, or used them as instruments of a kind of witchcraft. One would have thought that these symbols would only have been like windows of agate and gates of carbuncle through which men would behold the Savior and draw near to Him. Instead, some have neither looked through the windows nor passed through the gates, but have ascribed to the *gates and the windows* that which is only to be found in Him who is behind them both! It is sad, indeed, when the *symbol* takes the place of the Savior!

Man is by nature both an atheist and an idolater. These are two shades of the same thing. We need, if we worship at all, something that we can see. But a God that can be seen is no God—and so the idolater is first cousin to the atheist. He has a god which is not god, for he cannot be a god if he can be apprehended by human senses. This Ark of the Covenant, which was but a chest of wood covered with gold, with angelic figures on the lid, was simply a token of the Presence of God with His people. But these Israelites transformed it into a sacred object, to be highly revered, to be worshipped and, as it appears, to be trusted in. The elders said, “Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when *it* comes among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.” They ascribed to the Ark what could only be done by God, Himself!

This is the tendency of us all. Anything which we can see, we pine after. Hence we lean upon the arm of flesh! We trust in man, though it is written plainly enough, “Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord.” Yet, we still need some symbol, some token, *something* before our eyes—and if it can be something *artistic*, so much the better! We lay hold of something beautiful that will charm the eyes and produce a kind of sensuous feeling and, straightway, we mistake our transient emotion for spiritual worship and true reverence! This is the great mistake that many still make—they think that God has come into the camp merely because some outward religious rite or ceremony has been observed—or because some sacred shrine has been set up among them.

These Israelites fell into another mistake which is also often made today—they *preferred office to character*. In their distress, instead of calling upon God, they sent for Hophni and Phinehas. Why did their hearts turn to *them*? Simply because they were priests and the people had come to hold the sacred office in such superstitious reverence that they thought that was everything! But these young men were exceedingly great sinners against the Lord—they were not even moral men, much less spiritual men! They made the House of God to be abhorred and dishonored the Lord before all Israel. Yet, because they happened to hold the office of the priesthood, they were put in the place of God.

Dear Friends, this is a kind of feeling which many indulge. They think they shall be saved if they have a Levite for their priest! They imagine that the worship of God must be conducted properly because the man who conducts it is in the Apostolic succession and has been duly ordained! You shall see a man eminent for the holiness of his life, for the disinterestedness of his character, for the fidelity of his preaching, for his power in prayer, for the blessing that rests upon his ministry in the conversion of sinners—but he is counted a mere nobody because he lacks the superstitious qualification which deluded men think is so necessary! Here are Hophni and Phinehas, two of the grossest sinners in all the land of Israel—but then, you see, they are in the line of Aaron and so they are trusted—and, indeed, are put in the place of God!

Now, God forbid that we should say a word against the house of Aaron, or against any who speak the name of the Lord whom God has truly called

unto His work! But, Beloved, this work is not a mere matter of pedigree—it is a question of the abiding Presence of God with man and in a man! Unless God is with the minister whom you hear, to what purpose do you listen? If the leader of the Church is not one who walks with God, where will he lead you? “If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” The blind man may wear a badge on his arm to show that he is a certified guide, but will you be saved from the ditch simply because he belongs to the order of guides and has his certification with him? Be not led away by any such vain notion! Yet this is the error into which many have fallen in all ages of the Church.

But these people who faced the Philistines made another mistake—*they confused enthusiasm with faith*. When they saw the Ark, they shouted so that the earth rang again. “These are the kind of people I like,” says one, “people that can shout.” If that is all you need, why do you not go among the bulls of Bashan and make your home in the midst of them? They can make more noise than any mortal men can make. These Israelites shouted, but there was nothing in their noise any more than there is in their modern imitators! Anyone who had passed the camp of Israel, that day, might have said that they had “a bright, cheerful, happy service; just the kind of service the people like—you know—nothing dull about it.” Listen! How the glad sound rises! Surely these people must have great faith! No, they had not a scrap of the real article! They were mistaken all the time and, shout as they might, they had very little to shout about—for in a short time their carcasses strewed the plain! The Philistines put an end to their shouting.

Now, Beloved, when you are worshipping God, shout if you are filled with holy gladness. If the shout comes from your heart, I would not ask you to restrain it. God forbid that we should judge any man’s worship! But do not be so foolish as to suppose that because there is loud noise there must also be faith! Faith is a still water—it flows deep. True faith in God may express itself with leaps and shouts—and it is a happy thing when it does—but it also sits still before the Lord and that, perhaps, is a happier thing, still. Praise can sit silent on the lips and yet be heard in Heaven. There is a passion of the heart too deep for words. There are feelings that break the backs of words—the mind staggers and trembles beneath the weight of them! Frost of the mouth often comes with thaw of the soul and when the heart’s great deeps are breaking up, it sometimes happens that the mouth is not large enough to let the torrents flow—and so it has to be comparatively silent. Do not, therefore, make the mistake of confusing enthusiasm with faith in judging the externals of worship! Otherwise you may fall into a thousand blunders!

He may worship God who shouts till the earth rings, again, and God may accept him, but he may worship God as truly who sits in silence before the Most High and says not even a word. It is the *spiritual* worship which is most acceptable to God, not the external in any shape or form. It is the *heart* that has fellowship with the Lord and it needs little in the way of expressing itself—neither has God tied it down to this way or that. It may find its own methods of utterance so long as it is truly “moved by the Holy Spirit.”

Another mistake these people made that day was this—*they valued novelty above Scriptural order*. “The Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! For there has not been such a thing before.” The Israelites probably made the same mistake, fixing their hope on this new method of fighting the Philistines which they hoped would bring them victory. We are all so apt to think that the new plan of going to work will be much more effective than those that have become familiar—but it is not so. It is generally a mistake to exchange old lamps for new. “There has not been such a thing before.” There is a glamour about the novelty which misleads us and we are liable to think the newer is the truer. If there has not been such a thing before, some people will take to it, at once, for that very reason. “Oh,” says the man who is given up to change, “that is the thing for me!” But it is probably *not* the thing for a true-hearted and intelligent Christian, for if, “there has not been such a thing before,” it is difficult to explain if the thing is a good one, because the Holy Spirit, who has been with the people of God since Pentecost, and who came to lead us into all the Truth of God, has not led the Church of God to this before.

If your new discovery is the mind of God, where have the Holy Scriptures been all these centuries? Believing in the Infallible Word and the abiding Spirit, I rather suspect your novelty—at least I cannot say that I endorse it until I have tested it by the Word of God. “Oh, but we had such a meeting! There never was the like of it,” you say. Probably you ought to pray that there may never be the like of it again, for, after all, the meetings in which hearts become broken before God—and in which men believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the same Savior who saved their forefathers, who have entered into Glory—are no novelty! Those meetings in which men come and give themselves up to God, where “the great transaction” is done, where they become the Lord’s and He becomes theirs, are very old-fashioned things—they have been before.

“We have heard with our ears, O God. Our fathers have told us what work You did in their days, in the times of old.” And if we could only see the same, we would not ask to be able to say, “There has not been such a thing before.” Philistines may like a thing that has not been before, but we like the thing that has been since the days of Pentecost, the things that come from Him who is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever”—the workings of that God who changes not, “with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Let Him work *His* blessed will and if He chooses to send a new thing on the earth, we will glorify His name! But because there are new things in the world, we will not ascribe them to Him, for they may come from quite another quarter. We remember that, “Lo, here is Christ, or there!” was the cry against which our Lord warned His disciples! Concerning such a cry, the Savior said, “Believe it or not.” To you, dear Friends, I would say—“Stand fast by your great Leader, the blessed, unchangeable Christ, and by the faith once and for all delivered to the saints, or else you will be on the road to a thousand blunders!”

The mistake made on that battlefield is a mistake which nowadays is frequently imitated. It assumes many forms. We fall into their error when we confuse ritual and spirituality. *Now, every form of religion has its ritual.*

The Quaker, who sits still and does not say a word, has a ritual so far. And he that has a thousand rites and ceremonies has a ritual so much farther. But if I have gone through the general routine of the worship of my Church and then think that I have done something acceptable to God, while yet my heart has not communed with Him in humble repentance, or faith, or love, or joy, or consecration, I make a great mistake! You may keep on with your religious performances for 70 years or more. You may never miss what our Scotch friends call, “a diet of worship.” You may not neglect a single rubric in the whole ritual—but it is all nothing unless the soul has fellowship with God! Godliness is a *spiritual* thing, for, “God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”

So far as our forms or worship help us towards this spiritual communion, they are good, but no farther. “Oh, well,” says one, “I never worship beneath a cathedral roof. I am quite content to meet with a few friends in a barn.” Do not suppose, my Friend, that the meagerness of your accessories has necessarily secured true worship! If you have met God in the barn, it is well. And if your brother has met God in the right spirit, I care but little for your barn, and I care even less for his cathedral. What does it matter *how* you have garnished your offering if it is not a living sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ? A dead thing must not be brought to the altar of God! Remember, that under the Jewish law, they never offered fish upon the altar because they could not bring it there alive. Everything brought to God as a sacrifice must be alive. Its blood must be poured out warm at the altar’s foot. Oh that you and I might feel that lifting of the soul to God and that buoyancy of heart which true spiritual worship alone can bring to us! May our ritual, whether we have much or little, be our guide to God and not our chain to hold us back from God!

We fall into the same blunder that the Israelites and the Philistines made if we *consider orthodoxy to be salvation*. We have secured much that is worth keeping when we have, intellectually and intelligently, laid hold on that Divinely-revealed Truth of God, “the Gospel of the Grace of God.” But we have not obtained everything even then. O Sirs, if it were possible for you to believe every word of Christ’s teaching. If it were possible to hold with only an intellectual faith the teaching of the Apostles, rejecting all besides, and to hold it with an accuracy so great that in no jot or tittle you had made a mistake, it would profit you nothing! For “except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” He may understand these things so as to be a theologian, but he must have them worked into his soul by the Holy Spirit so as to make him a saint, or else he has not really understood them at all!

Unless these are your meat and your drink, they are nothing to you. Unless you find Christ in them, you will find in them your ruin—they shall be the “savor of death” to you. Remember, it was a beautiful tomb in which the dead Christ was laid, but He left it, and there was nothing there but grave clothes after He had gone. And, in like manner, the best-constructed system of theology, if it has not Christ in it, and if he who holds it is not, himself, *spiritually* alive, it is nothing more than a tomb in which are trappings for the dead! It is nothing better than a gilded ark,

without the Presence of God and, although you may shout and say, “God is come into the camp,” it will not be so.

We fall into the same error if we *regard routine as security* and think that because we have often done a thing, and have not suffered for it, therefore it will always be well with us. We are all such creatures of habit that, at length, our repeated actions seem to be natural and right. Because sentence against their evil works is not speedily executed, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil! But though Pompeii may slumber long at the foot of Vesuvius, at length it is overwhelmed. It behooves every one of us to try our ways and specially to call in question things which have become a sort of second nature to us. This is the fault of which Peter gives warning concerning the scoffers of the last days who will say with regret to the blessed Truth of Christ’s Second Advent, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” The Apostle says of such, “they are willingly ignorant” and, therefore, are they willfully ignorant of the terrible and unalterable doom that awaits them at the coming of their Judge!

Thus, like the Israelites, we may shout as we see the Ark of the Covenant, although our sins have driven the Lord far from us! Or, like the Philistines, we may say, “God has come into the camp,” and yet He may not be there at all in the sense in which they meant. Thus I might continue to illustrate my text, but time would fail me and I have yet to speak upon two other points.

II. Having considered the great mistake these people made, I will draw your attention, in the second place, to THE GREAT TRUTH of which their mistake is a caricature. Though what the Philistines said and what the Israelites thought, on this occasion, was false, it is often true. God *does* come to the camp of His people and His Presence *is* the great power of His Church. O Brothers and Sisters, what joy comes to us at such a time! I will briefly sketch the scene that takes place when God comes into the camp.

Then *the Truth of the Gospel becomes vital*. The Doctrines of Grace have, then, with them, the Grace of the Doctrines! Then is Christ not only to us the Truth, but He is also the Way and the Life. The Gospel then becomes a sword with two edges and it does marvelous execution. The Word of God then shows itself to be both a hammer and a fire, smiting and melting those upon whom its power is proved. Whoever preaches the Gospel, when God has come into the camp, speaks with power! He may have little eloquence and less learning—but if God is with him and if his heart is all aglow with Divine Love—he will speak with power and the people will say, “Surely, God is in this place, and we know it.”

When God comes into the camp, *new life is put into prayer*. Instead of the repetition of holy phrases in a cold, feeble, lifeless fashion, the soul empties itself out before the Lord like water flowing from a fountain! And men and women cry mightily unto Him, laying hold upon the horns of the altar—and they come away with both hands full of Heaven’s own blessing—for they have prevailed with God in mighty wrestling!

By the Presence of God in the camp, *fresh energy is thrown into service*. There is a way of serving the Lord in which men do the proper thing while they are fast asleep. I am afraid much of our service for God is done while we are asleep and that it is accompanied by a kind of celestial snoring, instead of being performed when our spiritual faculties are all alert and the whole man is wide awake. But when God comes into the camp, how He shakes men up and awakens the slumberers from their dreams! What a quickening, what a vivifying, the Presence of God gives! I remember a picture on the Continent that strangely represents the Resurrection. Some of the people who are pictured as being raised from the dead have some of their bones coming together. Others have their heads covered with flesh, but the rest of the body is a skeleton. Nothing seems complete in this strange, wild conception of a mad artist. But there are hundred of Christian people who seem to be spiritually in as incomplete a stage as those people were supposed to be! They are, I hope, quickened from the dead, but they are not yet fully alive into God! Some of them are still dead in their head—their intellect has not yet been sanctified. Some of them are dead at their hands—they cannot get them into their pockets, or if they manage so much as that, they cannot get them out again! Some of them are dead at heart—they seem to know things very well with the brain, but not to feel them in the soul. But when the Lord comes to us with power, He makes us alive all over—every part of the man is quickened with a Divine energy! Then men *really* work for Jesus and work successfully, too.

When God comes into the camp, His Presence *convincing unbelievers*. Sinners turn to the Lord on the right hand and on the left in so marvelous a way that our weak faith is often quite astonished! The last persons in the world that we expected to be converted come to our services—and there find Christ! And many who have been hearers for years, but seem harder than the lower millstone, become soft as wax to the Divine Word! When God comes into the camp, the Holy Spirit convinces men "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement." The arrows of conviction fly fast and far—and pierce the hearts of the enemies of the King—and the slain of the Lord are many!

The Presence of God, moreover, *comforts mourners*. When God comes into the camp, those who are troubled and tried begin to wipe away the tears of sorrow and feel strengthened to bear their burdens. Or, better still, they cast their care on Him who is so manifestly near! Our hearts are also cheered by seeing anxious sinners turn their eyes towards the Cross of Christ. Then Jesus reveals His love to them and they perceive it—they fly into His arms and find salvation there! Oh, what joyful times we have had of late in talking with many who have yielded themselves to Christ and taken Him to be all their salvation and all their desire! May God stay in the camp with us till every sinner that comes within our ranks and many, also, who are outside, shall come to Jesus and be saved!

When God is in the camp, His Presence *infuses daring faith*—feeble men begin to grow vigorous, young men dream dreams and old men see visions! Many begin to plot and plan something for Jesus which, in their timid days, they would never have thought of attempting! Others reach a height of consecration that seems to verge on imprudence. Alabaster

boxes get broken and the precious ointment is poured out upon the Master's head, even though Judas shakes his moneybag and cries, “To what purpose is this waste?” Adventurers for God are raised up—men like the Portuguese navigators who passed the Cape of Storms and called it, afterwards, the Cape of Good Hope! Men begin to mission the slums, the lodging houses, the dark streets and, after a while, those very places become happy hunting grounds for other Christian workers! Because God is in the camp, many take up the work which, at first, only the truly brave Believer dared to try!

The fact of God being in the camp cannot be hidden, for in a delightful way it *distils joy into worship*. People do not think sermons dull when God is in the camp! And Prayer Meetings are not, then, called, “stupid affairs.” The saints enjoy fellowship with one another and when Christian people meet each other, and God is in the camp, they have many a happy word to exchange concerning their Master. Many such seasons we have enjoyed! It has been with us as with the people mentioned by the prophet Malachi—“Then they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a Book of Remembrances was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.” They had such holy talk that God, Himself, turned eavesdropper to listen to what they had to say! He liked it so well that He put it down and He thought so much of it that He said He would preserve it—and a Book of Remembrances was made for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name. May there be many more such Books of Remembrances in our day!

I cannot tell you what innumerable blessings come to the camp of the spiritual Israel when God is there! I hope that we know a little of this, even now, and I am sure we want to know a great deal more of it. It is hard work preaching when God is not in the camp. It must be slavery to teach in the Sunday School when God is not in the camp. And any of you seeking souls must have a heavy drag on your spirits when the Lord is away. We might pray on Sabbath mornings, indeed, every day, and before every duty, but, “If Your Presence goes not with us, carry us not up from here.” But if the Lord is in the camp, then the wheels no longer drag heavily, but, like the chariots of Amminadib, we fly before the wind! Everything is done gladly, happily, thankfully, believingly, when “God is come into the camp.” May He abide in our midst and may our eyes be opened to see Him!—

***“Thrice blest is he to whom is given
The instinct that can tell
That God is in the field, when He
Is most invisible.”***

III. Now, in closing our meditations upon this passage, let us try to learn THE GREAT LESSONS which this incident teaches us.

The first lesson is that which I have been insisting upon all through—*the necessity of the Divine Presence*. Dear Friends, you acknowledge this. There is not one among us who does not know that the Holy Spirit is necessary to effect any work. But I am afraid that it is something which we know so well that we have put it up on a shelf—and there it lies un-

heeded. But it must not be so with you, my Brothers, nor with me. We must pray in the Holy Spirit, or else we shall not pray at all. And we must preach under the influence of the Holy Spirit, or else we shall chatter like sparrows on the windowsill in the morning—and nothing will come of the chattering. Only the Holy Spirit can make anything we do to be effectual! Therefore never begin any work without the Holy Spirit and do not dare go on with the impetus that you have gained, but cry again for the Holy Spirit. The “amen” of the sermon needs to be spoken in the power of the Holy Spirit just as much as the first word of the discourse—and every word between the first and the last. Let all your service for God be in the Spirit, or else it is all good for nothing.

Learn, next, that *we should do all we can to obtain the Presence of God in the camp*. If there are any preparations which we can make for His coming, let us set about them at once! You who are out of Christ must not think that there is anything for *you* to do before you receive Christ. All the doing has been done—

**“Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago.”**

But I am now addressing the people of God and if we would have God to come very near to us, we must prepare the way of the Lord and make straight in the desert a highway for our God. What can we do to obtain the Presence of God in our midst? My time has so far gone that I can only give you a few hints as to what we ought to do if we want to secure that end.

We must confess our helplessness without God and honestly mean the confession. The first thing that is required of us is to bemoan the fact that, by and of ourselves, we can do nothing, even as our Lord said to His disciples, “Without Me, you can do nothing.” The sooner we recognize this Truth of God, the better! Our half-doing is our undoing—but when we cease from self, then we make way for God.

We must, next, have a universal desire for the Presence of God with us. I mean by that, that every Christian man and every Christian woman must agonize with God that He would come into the camp—not merely some few of us desiring it, but *all of us* vehemently crying unto the Lord, “Come, Lord, and tarry not.”

We must also be very careful in our lives. God will not come to an unholy Church. The sacred Dove will never come to a foul nest. There must be a purging and a cleansing, or else He will not come.

Moreover, there must be a conscientious obedience to His Word, a strict adherence to His Truth, His Doctrine, His Precepts—to the whole of Christ’s Rule and Law. He will not prosper us unless we are careful to follow every step that He has taken. God help us to have this conscientious care, this coming out from those who may not be thus careful, according to His Word, “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.”

If we desire this special sense of God’s Presence, there must be unbroken union. The Spirit of God does not love fighting. He is a dove and He will not come where there is constant strife. We must be as one man in

our love to one another. It was when the disciples were “with one accord in one place” that the Holy Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost—and thus it is in all our Pentecostal seasons. Often a stone seems to lie at the well’s mouth of our choicest blessings—and it cannot be rolled away “until the flocks are gathered together.”

To crown all, there must be a hearty reliance upon God and a childlike confidence in Him. I would recommend you either believe in God up to the hilt, or else not believe at all! Believe this Book of God, every letter of it, or else reject it! There is no logical standing place between the two. Be satisfied with nothing less than a faith that swims in the deeps of Divine Revelation! A faith that paddles about the edge of the water is poor faith and is not good for much. Oh, I pray you, do believe in God and His Omnipotence!

Such are the conditions of obtaining the blessing of God’s abiding Presence. If these things abound in us, we shall be able to shout without making any mistake about the matter, “God has come into the camp.”

When God does come to us, *we should seek by all means to retain His Presence*. How can this blessing be secured?

First, by humble walking with God. If we grow proud because we are honored by our King’s company and begin to think that there must be, after all, something in *us* to attract God to us and cause His face to shine upon us, we shall not long have the Lord among us! Seek, then, to be lowly in His Presence.

Next, let much grateful praise be given to Him from loyal hearts. If God is saving sinners, let us give Him the Glory of it. If He is at work among us, let us not go and talk about what *we* have been doing, but let us tell to men and angels, too, what HE has done! Let us never dare to handle God’s jewels as if they were our own.

Moreover, there must be perpetual watchfulness. If God is with us, He may give us a great victory and yet, tomorrow we may be defeated because Achan has hidden the goodly Babylonian garment and the wedge of gold. Unless we are sober and vigilant, we may sadly have to mourn that the Lord has withdrawn His Presence from us. There is a fierce light that beats around His Throne. “Our God is a consuming fire.” Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? The Scriptural answer is, “He that walks righteously and speaks uprightly.” May God make us men of such caliber as can endure that heat!

And lastly, there must be an individual fellowship with God on the part of each one of us. It is hard work for the whole Church to walk with God every day and all the day. But if each member will see to it that his own personal life is right, the Church, as a whole, need fear nothing. Let us, each one, look after his own life and see that all is right there. Then the life of the Church will soon be at flood tide, and when we go forth to the battle, the Philistines will know for sure that, “God is come into the camp.” May God speedily raise us all up to this point of personal consecration!

Dear Friends, we are having sinners saved in our midst—pray for them! Some are struggling towards the Light of God—seek to help them! If you

meet with any such, love them and cherish them as a father does his child. I cannot speak longer. Your hearts must tell you what to do. Go on serving the Lord. May He abide with us in power forevermore! Amen.

Portion Of Scripture Read Before the Sermon—1 Samuel 4.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—968, 448, 992.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

Beloved Friends—The one need of the Church in these times is indicated by the title of this sermon. The Presence of God, in saving power, in the Church, will put to end the present plague of infidelity. Men will not doubt His Word when they feel His Spirit! It will be the only security for the success of the missionary effort. If God is with His people, they will soon see crowds converted and added to the Church. For a thousand reasons we need that Jehovah should come into the camp as before He visited and delivered His people from bondage in Egypt!

Could we not all unite in prayer for this as fervently as all united in prayer for my life? It is a far greater and more necessary subject for intercession and the Lord will not be slow to hear us! Come to Your Church, O Lord, in fullness of power to save! If the Great Advent is not yet, indulge us with outpourings of Grace and times of refreshing!

Oh, that all Christendom would take up this pleading and continue it until the answer came!

Receive, dear Readers, my hearty salutations. Personally, I scarcely make progress during this broken weather, but the doctor says I hold my own and that is more than he could have expected. Whether I live or die, I would say, in the words of Israel to Joseph, “God shall be with you.”

Yours ever heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, January 9, 1892.

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

DAGON'S UPS AND DOWNS

NO. 1342

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

“When the Philistines took the Ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the Ark of the Lord. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again. And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the Ark of the Lord; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him.”
1 Samuel 5:2-4.

The Ark of the Lord was captured by the Philistines though it was guarded by all the men of arms that Israel could muster for the battle. It came to no hurt when it was surrounded by unarmed priests—although the times were exceedingly disturbed and perilous all through the dreary period of the Judges, yet never was the Ark a captive till it was protected by carnal weapons. When those whom God had ordained to take care of the Ark of the Covenant had it in their charge, it was safe enough. But when the proud banners of the State and the warlike array of the nation formed the bodyguard of the sacred shrine, the Ark of God was taken. When the civil power was joined with the spiritual, and the arm of flesh came in to patronize and to take into connection with itself the arm of God's strength, then it was that the Ark was borne away in triumph by its foes!

All through human history you will find the explanation of this instructive fact—leave God's Truth alone and it will take care of itself without the aid of kings and princes, laws or establishments, endowments or privileges. Only state the pure Truth of Revelation and it will force its own way. But garnish and adorn it by your eloquent language, or protect and guard it by your carnal wisdom and prudence—and the Truth of God goes into captivity. Leave the Church alone, O you kings and princes, or persecute it if you will, for it will laugh your opposition to scorn! Do not pretend to propagate its doctrines by the civil power, for this is the worst curse that can befall it! Take it under your patronage and the mere touch of your royal hands will create disease within it!

Almost to the death has the so-called “Church” come down when her ministers, like Hophni and Phineas, have allied themselves with the temporal power, for God will do His work by His own instruments and in His own way. He will not be indebted to the might of flesh but will defend His own Glory by His own mysterious power. He uses for His instruments His consecrated ones who wear the white linen, which is the righteousness of saints—not the blood-stained men of war arrayed in coats of mail and glittering breastplate of steel.

Another lesson may be learned from the incident before us. When the Philistines had beaten the Israelites in battle and captured the sacred chest called the Ark, they boasted and gloried as though they had defeated God Himself! They evidently regarded the golden casket as the very choicest part of the spoil and they placed it as a trophy in the chief temple of their God, Dagon, to show that he was mightier than the God Jehovah who was unable, as they thought, to protect His people. This touched, at once, the honor of Jehovah, and because He is a jealous God this was good for Israel. The fact that God is a jealous God has often a terrible side to us, for it leads to our chastisement when we grieve Him. This, indeed, led to the defeat of Israel.

But it has, also, a bright side towards us, for His jealousy flames against His foes even more terribly than against His Friends! And when His name is blasphemed and honors that are due to Him are ascribed to a mere idol—or He is declared to have been defeated by a false god—then His jealousy burns like coals of juniper and He makes bare His right arm to smite His adversaries as He did on this occasion. He thinks it meet to punish His offending people, but when Philistia says, “Dagon has defeated Jehovah,” then the Lord will no longer suffer Philistia to triumph!

Jehovah's answer to His foes was Dagon broken to shivers before His Ark and the Philistines plagued with tumors, until, in their desperate pain and dire disgrace, they set the Ark free, being no longer able to endure its presence in any of their towns. And so the Jews ever afterwards used to exasperate the Philistines by reminding them of the disease which so sorely tried them. There is a dash of this in the Psalm which says of the Lord, “He smote His enemies in the inner part. He put them to a perpetual reproach.” Never did a boastful nation undergo a deeper dishonor in the eyes of their neighbors, to whom they became a laughingstock! And never did an image suffer a worse disgrace than that which befell their God, Dagon.

Now, then, whenever, at any time, infidelity or superstition shall so prevail as to discourage your minds, take comfort out of this—that in all these, God's honor is compromised. Have they blasphemed His name? Then He will protect that name! Have they gone further than they used to do in foul utterances against Him? Then they will provoke Him and He will make bare His holy arm! I pray that they may so provoke Him! All His Church will say, “Amen!” to that, so that He may arise and perform the glorious works of His strength and of His love among the sons of men and put the adversary to confusion by proving that He is still with His people—and still the same mighty God as He was in the days of yore.

Say to yourselves, then, “Our Lord will not always endure this idolatrous popery which is multiplying its priests within our national Church. His people cannot bear it—much less will He! He will not always tolerate these blasphemous theories by which self-conceited, learned men and vainglorious skeptics seek to get rid of God out of the world. They will provoke Him. He will bestir Himself. He will show Himself strong on the behalf of His Truth! He will roll back the waves of sin and let the ages know that He is still the great I AM, the victorious God over all, blessed forever.”

Those two Truths of God, seem to me, to lie upon the surface of this passage. And now, though it would be very wrong to make out the Word of God to be a mere set of allegories and so to deny that it records *facts*—and this, I trust, we shall never do—yet, as the Apostle Paul has shown us that many of the events in the Old Testament *are* an allegory, and as, indeed, these things are evidently *types*, and must be regarded as emblems and patterns of things that still occur—we shall use this passage in a spiritual way and make it the channel of experimental teaching.

Where the living God comes into the soul, Dagon, or the idol god of sin and worldliness, must go down! This is the one thought which we shall hammer out at this time.

I. To begin, then—the coming of the Ark into Dagon's temple was an apt simile of the coming of Christ into the soul. Dagon, according to the best information, was the fish-god of Philistia, perhaps borrowed from the Sidonians and the men of Tyre, whose main business was upon the sea and who, therefore, invented a marine deity. The upper part of Dagon was a man or woman and the lower part of the idol was carved like a fish. We get a very good idea of it from the common notion of the fictitious, fabulous creature called a mermaid.

Dagon was nothing more than a merman or mermaid, only, of course, there was no pretense of his being alive. He was a carved image—like that which the papists worship and call the Blessed Virgin, or Saint Peter, or Saint Remy. The temple at Ashdod was, perhaps, the cathedral of Dagon, the chief shrine of his worship—and there he sat erect upon the high altar with pompous surroundings. The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of Hosts was a small wooden box overlaid with gold. It was, by no means, a very cumbersome or bulky thing but, nevertheless, very sacred because it had a representative character and symbolized the Covenant of God—its capture was grievous, indeed, to pious Israelites, for they felt that the Glory of God was departed when the Ark was taken.

The sacred chest was carried in triumph by the Philistines and brought into the temple where Dagon stood. In your mind's eye you can see the fish-god high upon his throne and the incense burning before him as the priests gather around and the princes of Philistia, with triumphant banners, bow before his shrine. We hear the shouts of the Philistine lords as they bring in the golden coffer with the golden staves, set it down at the foot of Dagon and sing their exultant songs. Hear them as they sound their trumpets and chant their blasphemous hymns—"Glory be unto you, O Dagon! You have triumphed this day, O mighty god of the land and the sea! Glorious fish-god, you have vanquished those who vanquished the Canaanites. And though their God slew the Egyptians of old, you have smitten them by their thousands. Glory be unto you, you mighty god!"

Thus would they extol their deity and pour contempt upon the captured Ark, which they placed at the foot of the image. Then, when the service was over and they had worshiped Dagon to their heart's content, they shut up the temple and there was darkness in the holy place, or *unholy* place—which shall I call it? Not long did the Ark remain where it was, with Dagon still supreme, but the mere incoming of the Ark into the idol temple was a fair picture of the introduction of the Grace of God into the human

heart. The Philistines brought in the Ark of the Lord, but only an act of Divine power can bring the Grace of God into the soul.

By different instrumentalities the Truth of God, as it is in Jesus, is read, is heard, is brought to the recollection, is seen printed in the lives of men and so enters into the temple of the inner man or woman. When it first comes into the heart it finds sin enthroned there—and the Prince of Darkness reigning supreme. The first Grace that enters into the soul finds it in darkness and in death, under the dominion of sin. Brothers and Sisters, we have not to deliver *ourselves* from sin and death and darkness—and then obtain Grace! No! While we are yet DEAD, Divine Grace visits us! While we are yet slaves, the Liberator comes! On our blackest midnight, the Sun of Righteousness arises!

While the Dagon of sin sits firmly on his throne, as if he never could be stirred and his horrid form is, alone, to be seen lording it over all the thoughts and imaginations of the heart, even *then* it is that “God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins,” sends His almighty Grace to dwell within us! When that Grace enters the soul, it comes not with observation—and sin, at first does not know any more about the incoming of Grace than Dagon knew about the Ark. The Grace, the Light, the Truth, the Love of God come into the soul and the man does not know, as yet, what the Lord has done for him.

He is only conscious of some impression—of a thoughtfulness he had never known before, of a calm frame of mind, of a desire to consider eternal things—that may be all that he perceives of the Lord's work within him. His Dagon seems to still be there in as supreme a majesty as ever—only something strange is also within the mind—the man has no idea what it is. It is the beginning of the end—of a blessed and glorious end! We have now Dagon *and* the Ark in the same temple—Sin and Grace in the same heart—but this state of things cannot long abide! No man can serve two masters! And even if he could, the two masters would not agree to be served!

The two great principles of Sin and Grace will not abide in peace with each other, they are as opposite as fire and water. There will be conflict and victory, but we know which will conquer, for as surely as ever the Grace of God comes into the soul, Sin receives notice to exit! That night, when the Philistines had finished their exulting ceremonies, they thought they had left Dagon robed in glory, reigning and triumphing over the Ark of the Lord. They had scarcely shut the doors and gone before Dagon fell on his face to the ground before the Ark. Down he went! He did not lean over—he fell! Nor did he drop upon his side, but he was made to do obeisance before the Ark, for he fell on his face! And he did not fall merely part of the way, but fell on his face to the ground before the Ark—a change of positions very significant to his worshipers!

The Ark was set at the foot of Dagon and now Dagon lies before the Ark as if he were prostrating himself in worship before the great and mighty God! Even thus Grace in the soul is not long before it overthrows sin. What a turning of things upside down Grace always makes! The watchword is, “Overturn, overturn, overturn!” The Breaker is come up, and the

images of man's invention must be dashed to shivers! Very likely your Dagon is in the shape of self-righteousness. I shall call it Dagon, for it is nothing better—one of the worst idols in the whole world is the idol of *self*. The self-righteous man boasts that he is as good as other people, if not a little better, although he is not a Christian.

He does not know that he has ever done *anything* very wrong and he feels that in him there is a great deal that is very good and excellent and, therefore, he expects that things will go well with him at last. He has a very fine figure for his god, and though there may be a rather "fishy" tail to his character, he keeps that as much out of sight as possible and conceals it with excuses. The god of his self-confidence is a very pretty thing, take it for all in all—it is as beautiful as a mermaid and he is fascinated with its beauty. He bows before his idol and sings before it that ancient canticle of the Philistines—I mean the Pharisees—which begins, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are!"

When Grace enters the soul the dominion of self-confidence comes to an end! Down goes the fish-god on its face to the ground before the Ark of the Lord and the man discovers that he has no such righteousness as that in which he trusted. He begins to bemoan his sins and to lament his shortcomings. A perfect change of feeling has come over him. He loathes himself as much as he once admired himself! And now, instead of taking the highest seat in the synagogue, he is willing to be a doormat in the House of the Lord. "Ah, me!" he says, "what a sinner I am! How vile in the sight of God!" Can you see how this brave Dagon has gone down on his face to the ground before the Ark?

Perhaps the man never had much of this vainglorious self-righteousness, but he served the Dagon of besetting and beloved sin. The man was a drunk. Bacchus ruled him—but as soon as the Grace of God is brought into his soul, he has done with the drink-God! The horrible Dagon of drunkenness is hurled from its throne by Divine Grace. The man cannot bear to think that he should have so disgraced himself as to be fond of wantonness, drunkenness and such-like abominable sins which bring manhood below the level of the beast! He who is truly penitent hates the very name of these filthy sins!

If a man has been guilty of using bad language and profane swearing, the Grace of God generally cures him of that at once. I have heard men who had lived in the practice of swearing for many years say that, from the time they were converted, they have never been tempted to it—that black sin went away—bag and baggage at once! Some sins are slow in dying, but profanity generally gives up the ghost without a struggle. John Bunyan says that a stone from the battering ram slew Mr. Profane by cracking his skull, so that he died early in the siege of outward offenses. Like Dagon, they are soon down before the Ark. Sin of every sort is bowed low before the triumphant Grace of God! Yes, and the man who receives the Grace of God feels that the love of any and every sin is cast out of its place in his heart. Now he desires to be quit of it all and anxiously cries, "Lord, what would you have me to do?" He will no more go and live in sin, as he did before, than Paul will continue to be a persecutor after the Lord, even Jesus, has appeared to him by the way. What a Dagon-fall there was

in the Apostle's pride just outside the Damascus gate! Such a fall takes place in the heart of every man to whom the Grace of God comes with power!

The parallel may be run a little further. This fall of Dagon very soon began to be perceived, for, "When they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen on his face to the earth." Very soon after the entrance of Divine Grace, this sign follows and, before long, it is seen and known. Let no man conceive that there is Grace in his soul if Dagon still sits on the throne! This is one of the earliest tokens of the entrance of the life of God into the soul—that sin falls down from its high place and is no more held in honor. At the same time, observe that Dagon was not broken. He had fallen on his face, but that was all—so that the next day his foolish worshipers set him up, again.

Sometimes, at the first entrance of Grace, there is a downfall of sin, but nothing like such a breaking and destroying of sin in the soul as there will be afterwards. When the Divine life has entered, sin is dethroned—it no longer sits up there in the place of God—but yet, for all that, there is an awful power remaining in the corrupt nature. There is a deadly tendency to sin, a powerful law in the members bringing the soul into captivity. Still, down the idol goes, even if it is not broken! It cannot *reign*, though it may *remain* to trouble us.

Now, what happened on the night mentioned in the text? Dagon fell before the Ark when it was all quiet and still in the temple. While the worshipers were there, during the day, there was noise and shouting—the false god sat aloft and you could not tell that there was any mysterious power about the Ark. It was in the quiet of the night that this deed was done and thus, often, in the hearing of the Word, Grace is introduced into the heart. But you would not know that any change was worked, for it is only when the man gets away from the world's business—gets alone and begins to consider—that a Divinely-mysterious might is displayed by the inward Grace so as to sink sin and lay the power of evil low.

Would to God our hearers took more opportunities for quietly considering the Word of God! How much more blessing might often be gotten out of sermons and books if there were more meditation! You get the grapes, but you do not tread them in the winepress! There is more trouble taken to collect the sheaves of the sermon than is afterwards expended in threshing them out! The power which smote Dagon was displayed in the quiet of the night—and when the Grace of God has entered into your souls, it is probable that the coming down of sin will be better effected in times of quiet thought and searching of heart than at any other period. *Thought* is the channel of immense benefit to the soul. Shut the temple doors and let all be still—and then will the Holy Spirit work wonders in the soul!

II. Now, secondly, the setting up of Dagon, the second time, and his second fall very well represent the battle going on in the soul between sin and Grace. What fools these Philistines were to continue worshiping a god which, when it tumbled down, could not get up again! To worship a god which fell on its face was bad enough, but to worship one that could not rise when he fell—but needed to be set in his place by *human* hands—was

certainly vile infatuation! But they took up their precious deity and they put him in his place again and, no doubt, sang a special "high mass" to him and then went their way, quietly, to their homes, little dreaming that their pretty fish-god would need their help again so soon!

Even thus Satan and the flesh come into our souls and try to set our fallen Dagon up, again, with some measure of success. It often happens that in young converts there comes a period when it looks as if they had altogether apostatized and gone back to their former ways. It seems as if the work of God were not real in their souls and Divine Grace was not triumphant. Do you wonder at it? I have ceased to wonder! The Gospel is preached and the man accepts it—and there is a marvelous difference in him! But when he goes among his old companions, although he is resolved not to fall into his former sins, they try him severely. He is assailed in a thousand ways!

Some of our young people, if they were to tell their story, would harrow up your feelings by mentioning the way in which all sorts of jests, insinuations and taunts are hurled at them—and that by influential persons—their parents, their elder brothers and sisters and those who oversee their work. They are beset behind and before, so that if they do not transgress in one way, it is very likely that the devil craftily trips them up in another. I have known a man, when he has been tempted to go into evil company, refuse again, and again, and again. His tempters have laughed at him and he has borne it all—but at last he has lost his temper—and as soon as the enemies have seen his passion boiling up, they have cried out, "Ah, there you are! We have got you!" At such a time as that the poor man is apt to cry, "Alas, I cannot be a Believer or else I should not have done this."

Now, all this is a violent attempt of Satan and the flesh to set Dagon up again! They know that the Lord has thrown him down and they cannot bear it. They would gladly set the fish-god, again, on his throne. Sometimes they do, for a time, set Dagon up, again, and cause great sorrow in the soul. I have known a poor lost lamb to be found and brought into the fold, but it has miserably wandered for a time, and the devil has thought that, surely, he had got that lamb and would tear him in pieces. And yet he has been deceived after all! Dagon was only set up for a time and he had to come down again—and so it happens wherever Grace enters the heart. The wanderers have come back, weeping and sighing, to admit that they have dishonored their profession—and what has been the result in the long run?

Why, they have had more humility, more tenderness of heart, more love to Christ, more gratitude than they had before! And I have been glad, (not glad that they wandered), but glad that the Grace of God, when He has brought them back again more fully, has given them a deeper conversion and a more lasting and substantial work of Grace, so that afterwards they have continued, by the Grace of God, honorable, useful Christians even to the end! Often and often is that the case, and I speak at this time to any young convert who can say in his heart, "O Sir, I do love the Lord, but I have been such a backslider! I do trust Jesus. I wish to be a Christian, but I have been overthrown by enemies! I fear I must not join a Christian

Church because if I could not resist temptation for six weeks, how could I expect to stand fast all my life? I am such a poor, weak creature, so apt to be led astray, what is to become of me?" Dear Friend, grieve to think you were so foolish, but do not doubt the power of God's Holy Spirit to help you and to break in pieces the enemy who *seems* to have resumed his power over you!

Now, notice that although they again set Dagon up, he had to go down again with a worse fall. I have no doubt it took them a long pull and a great heave to haul the uncomely lump of marble into its place again. Many strong limbs were tired and muscles strained to lift up the huge god and set him on his pedestal! But it was no trouble for the Lord to upset the ugly stone! No rope was needed and no straining or pulling! "Bel bows down and Nebo stoops" when Jehovah uplifts Himself! Only shut the temple gates and leave the Ark and Dagon to have it out between them—and Dagon gets the worst of it! Only, mark this, Dagon has not gained much by being reinstated, for this time, when he comes down, behold, he was fallen on his face to the ground before the Ark of Jehovah, "and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold."

The idol's head was gone and, even so, the reigning power of sin is utterly broken and destroyed—its beauty, its cunning, its glory are all dashed to atoms! This is the result of the Grace of God, and the sure result of it, if it once comes into the soul, however long the conflict may continue and however desperate the efforts of Satan to regain his empire. O Believer, sin may trouble you, but it shall not tyrannize over you! "Sin shall not have dominion over you," says the Holy Spirit, "for you are not under the Law, but under Grace." If the power of evil is set up for awhile, it shall only come down with the greater force—and its head shall be cut off.

Then, too, the hands of Dagon were broken off and even thus the active power, the *working* power of sin is taken away. Both the palms of the idols' hands were cut off upon the threshold, so that he had not a hand left. Neither right-handed sin or left-handed sin shall remain in the Believer when God's sanctifying Grace fetches Dagon down! The secret *reigning* power is broken and so is the manifest *working* power. The Christian is kept from putting forth his hand into iniquity. He is crucified with Christ and so both hands are nailed to the Cross and fastened up from performing those deeds of ill towards which the lusts of the flesh would urge him! This happened, too, if you notice, very speedily, for we are told, a second time, that when they arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face.

It does not take Grace long, when it is once in the soul, to overturn the reigning power and the active energy of sin, even when these, for a while, appear to get the upper hand. Brothers and Sisters, I hope you know this. I hope that the Spirit of God, which is in you, and the love of Christ, which reigns in you, have destroyed the power which sin once had in your souls. If it is not so, then question yourselves whether the Spirit of God is in you at all! It is not possible that the Ark should be in the temple and

that Dagon should be standing there unbroken! Not till the morrow morning shall evil remain unchallenged and unmoved upon the throne!

It is not possible that you, dear Friend, could live and delight in sin, and yet be a child of God! If your heart is set upon iniquity, where your heart is, there your treasure is—and if sin is your treasure—you are no heir of Heaven! That which governs your heart is your Lord and your God—what your heart loves, by that you shall be judged—and if you love evil, you shall be condemned! We may sin—ah, would God we did not!—but to *love* sin is not in the Believer! There is a deadly antagonism between Grace and sin—and where the gracious life comes, the evil life must fall. There cannot be an alliance between Dagon and the Ark, between God and the world, or between Christ and sin!

III. And now, thirdly, the parallel still holds good in one more point, namely, that though the fish-god was thus maimed and broken, yet the stump of Dagon was left. The original Hebrew is, “Only Dagon was left to him,” or, “only the fish”—only the fish part remained. The head and the upper portions were broken away—there remained only the fishtail of Dagon and that was all—but that was not broken. Now, this is the business which brings us so much sorrow—that the stump of Dagon is left. I wish it were not.

I have heard some say that they have no sin remaining in them. Well, dear Brothers and Sisters, may the Lord convert you! I shall say no more than that, for if there were in you enough light for you to perceive your darkness, it were better than to talk as you do. Every child of God who knows anything about himself and the experience of a real Believer, knows that there is indwelling sin in him and that to a most fearful extent, so as to make his very soul cry out in agony, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” I could not go the length of singing, with Ralph Erskine, as a description of myself, the lines written by him in his, “Believer’s Sonnets”—

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

But yet, taken with a large lump of salt, there is a good deal of truth even in that unguarded expression!

There is the old corruption within us—and there is no use denying it—because denying it will put us off our guard, will make many of the puzzles of life to be quite unanswerable and often bring upon us great confusion of soul. The other Law is within us as well as Grace. Can you draw near to God, my Brothers and Sisters, and not see that He can justly charge you with folly? Can you stand in His Presence, as Job did, and behold His Glory, and not say, “I abhor myself in dust and ashes”? Can you have dealings with *Perfection* and not perceive your faults? Can you come near unto the innermost court of the Temple and stand in that excessive light of fellowship which is the portion of the Lord’s chosen and not see within yourself spots and wrinkles, yes, thousands of them, so as to make you cover your face for shame and adore the amazing Grace which loves you still?

Can you not see in your daily life enough to condemn you and cast you into Hell were it not that God still sees you in Christ and imputes not your

iniquity to you, but accepts you in the Beloved? Oh, it is so—it is so, indeed! The stump of Dagon is still left! And because it is left, dear Friend, it is a thing to be watched against, for though that stony stump of Dagon would not grow in the Philistine temple—yet they would make a new image and exalt it again, and bow before it as others. Alas, the stump of sin within us is not a slab of stone, but full of vitality like the tree cut down of which Job said, “At the scent of water it will bud.” Leave the sin that is in you to itself—let temptation come in the way and you shall see that which will blind your eyes with weeping!

It is a good thing to look at your face in a mirror, but your face is not yourself—no mirror can show you yourself. There is a certain temptation which has an affinity to the evil within you and, should Satan bring that temptation near, you will see yourself to your horror and shame! There shall then look out of the window of your countenance a man whom you did not see when you looked in the glass, for you only saw the house he lived in! So ugly is he that he makes the very house he lives in look horrible! When the angry man comes up and is visible to the naked eye, how he deforms the countenance! When obstinate old Adam comes to the window, what a dark forbidding face he wears! When that envious spirit comes up, what an evil glance there is in the eye! When the unbelieving spirit peers through the lattice, what a miserable countenance he shows compared with the face of faith and childlike confidence in God!

There is nobody in this world, dear Brothers and Sisters, that you have so much cause to be afraid of as yourself! Augustine used to pray, “Lord, deliver me from that evil man, myself.” A very appropriate prayer for a woman, too— “Lord, save me from myself.” If you are saved from yourself, you will be saved from the devil—for what can the devil do unless *self* joins hands with him in unholy league? But, oh, what watchfulness it will need! Here is room for faith, indeed! Faith does not decline the conflict nor puff us up with the notion that the fight is over—on the contrary, it takes to itself the whole armor of God because it sees the battle to be still raging! Faith is needed to be the shield to keep off the fiery darts and the sword with which to smite the foe.

Here is the sphere in which faith is to work—it does not talk of ended warfare, but carries on the life-long campaign to ultimate victory. Faith does not say, “I have ceased the conflict”—she knows better! Faith says, “I am in the midst of it, warring with a thousand foes and looking for the victory through Jesus Christ, my Lord.” O Brothers and Sisters, be strong in faith by the power of the Holy Spirit, for you have need to be, since the stump of Dagon still remains! The lusting of the flesh abides still in the regenerate! Look at this matter again. That stump of Dagon which remained was a vile thing—it was a piece of an *idol*—a fragment of a monstrous image which had been worshiped instead of God!

Now, the sin which dwells in you is never to be regarded by you as anything else than a horrible, loathsome and detestable thing. After such love as you and I have known, that there should be in us even the power to be ungrateful ought to shock us! After such proof of His Truth as God has shown us, that after such faithfulness and such abundant evidences of faithfulness we should *still* be capable of unbelief ought to be a sorrow to

us! Oh, I wish I could never sin again throughout time or eternity! Oh, that every particle of the tinder of depravity into which the devil could let a spark fall was gone from my nature! It is a mercy to have the sparks put out, but it is a pity to have even the tinder left—and there is plenty of this tinder about us all!

Tinder? Yes, gunpowder so quick to take the light which Satan is ever ready to bring! We carry a bombshell heart about with us—and we had better keep clear of all the devil's candles lest there should be an explosion of actual sin. These candles are common enough in the form of some plausible but skeptical friend, or in the form of amusements which are questionable. Keep clear of Lucifer's matches! You have got enough mischief in your heart without going where you will get more! If anybody here feels that he is so very gracious and good that he can safely enter into temptation, I am sure that he is laboring under a very great mistake! I would say to him, "Brother, there is devil enough in you without your sending out invitation cards to seven more! Go to Him that casts out devils! Go into company where the powers of evil will be held in chains and bound—do not go where other devils as wicked as yourself will call to the demon who now besets you and stir him up to work mischief! The stump of Dagon is left. Be careful, watchful, prayerful—and loathe sin with all your soul."

IV. But now, lastly, here is mercy that though the stump of Dagon was not taken out of the Philistine temple, we may go beyond the history and rejoice that it will be taken from our hearts! The day is coming, Brother, Sister, in which there will be no more inclination in you to sin than there is in an angel! The day is coming in which your nature shall be so established in the Truth of God and righteousness and holiness that all the devils in Hell will not be able to make you think a wrong thought!

"Oh," says one, "I wish that time would come soon." It will come, Brother. The Lord will keep you fighting and warring, but there will come a day when a messenger will wait at your door and he will say, "The pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern. Your flesh must return to the dust and your spirit to God that made it." And then your spirit shall open its eyes with glad surprise and find itself delivered from the body and, at the same time, delivered from all sin! There shall also come, by-and-by, the sound of the trumpet of Resurrection and the body shall rise—and one of the chief characteristics of the risen body will be that as it rises it will be free from the bondage of corruption—it will have no tendency to lead us into sin! When our perfected spirit shall enter into our perfect body, then our complete manhood—body, soul and spirit—shall, by God's Grace, have no stain, or spot, or flaw!

All its past sin will be washed away—no, is washed away—in the blood of the Lamb! And all its propensities, tendencies and inclinations to sin shall all be gone forever! The very possibilities of sinning shall be eternally taken away—

***"No cloud those blissful regions know,
Forever bright and fair;
For sin, the source of mortal woe,***

Can never enter there.

John Bunyan represents Mercy as laughing in her sleep. She had a dream, she said, and she laughed because of the great favors which were yet to be bestowed upon her. Well, if some of you were to dream, tonight, that the great thing which I have spoken of had actually happened to you, so that you were completely free from all tendency to sin, would not you, also, be as they that dream and laugh for very joy? Think of it—no more cause for watchfulness, no more need of weeping over the day's sin before you fall asleep at night! No more sin to confess, no devil to tempt you, no worldly care, no lust, no envy, no depression of spirit, no unbelief—will not this be a very large part of the joy of Heaven?

Why, I am ready to cry for joy to think that this will happen to me, unworthy though I am! "Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name." It will be so, Brothers and Sisters, both to you and to me! As surely as we have trusted Christ, He will perfect that which concerns us—

***"The feeblest saint shall win the day,
Though death and Hell obstruct the way."***

The Lord has undertaken our perfect sanctification and He will accomplish it! He has brought old Dagon down and broken his head and his hands—and He will break him to shivers before long. Yes, He will take the Ark of the Lord away where Dagon shall never come into contact with it any more. He will take you—the gracious part of you, your truest and best self—away into Glory to abide with Him forever! Think of this and sing! Yes, Brothers and Sisters, sing with all your might, for all this may happen within a week. A week? It may happen within a day! It may happen before you reach home tonight!

We are so near to Heaven that if we were not very dull and our ears very heavy, we might, right now, hear the angels chanting their ceaseless hallelujahs! Some of God's saints—some here, perhaps—have almost got their foot upon the threshold of the Eternal City and do not know it! They are closer than they think to the harp and the palm branch. They would not fret about what they will do next year—they would not be worrying about next quarter—if they knew that they would be among the royalties of Heaven by then! They would not even think about tomorrow did they know how soon it will all be over and how soon the eternal joy will begin!

God bless you, dear Friends. May the Lord's Grace reign over all, in the power of the Holy Spirit—and even to sinners in whom sin is triumphant may Jesus Christ come—and His Grace enter! And then their beloved sins must fall. To the only living and true God be Glory forever and ever! Amen.

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EBENEZER!

NO. 500

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 15, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpeh
and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer,
saying, Up to now has the Lord helped us.”
1 Samuel 7:12.*

IT is certainly a very delightful thing to mark the hand of God in the lives of ancient saints. How profitable an occupation to observe God's goodness in delivering David out of the jaws of the lion and the paws of the bear—His mercy in passing by the transgression, iniquity, and sin of Manasseh, His faithfulness in keeping the Covenant made with Abraham—or His interposition on the behalf of the dying Hezekiah. But, Beloved, would it not be even more interesting and profitable for us to remark the hand of God in our own lives?

Ought we not to look upon our own history as being at least as full of God, as full of His goodness, and of His Truth—as much a proof of His faithfulness and veracity as in the lives of any of the saints who have gone before? I think we do our Lord an injustice when we suppose that He worked all His mighty acts in days of yore, and showed Himself strong for those in the early time, but does not perform wonders or lay bare His arm for the saints that are now upon the earth. Let us review, I say, our own diaries.

Surely in these modern pages we may discover some happy incidents, refreshing to ourselves and glorifying to our God. Have *you* had no *deliverances*? Have you passed through no rivers, supported by the Divine Presence? Have you walked through no fires unharmed? Have you not been saved in six troubles? Yes, in seven has not Jehovah helped you? Have you had no *manifestations*? The God that spoke to Abraham at Mamre, has He never spoken to you? The angel that wrestled with Jacob at Peniel, has he never wrestled with you? He that stood in the fiery furnace with the three holy children, has He never trod the coals at your side?

O, He has manifested Himself unto us as He does not unto the world. Forget not these manifestations—fail not to rejoice in them. Have you had no *choice favors*? The God that gave Solomon the desire of his heart, has He never listened to you, and answered your requests? That God of lavish bounty, of whom David sang, “Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's,” has He never satiated *you* with fatness? Have you never been made to lie down in green pastures? Have you never been led by the still waters?

Surely, Beloved, the goodness of God of old has been repeated unto us. The manifestations of His Grace to those gone to Glory has been renewed to us, and delivering mercies as experienced by them are not unknown

even to us, upon whom the ends of the world are come. I beg you, therefore, dear Friends, for a little time this morning, to fix your thoughts upon your God in connection with yourselves. And, while we think of Samuel piling the stones, and saying, "Up to now has the Lord helped us," let us lay the emphasis upon the last word and say, "Up to now has the Lord helped US," and if you can put it in the singular and say, "Up to now has the Lord helped ME," so much the better.

Again, it is a very delightful exercise to remember the various ways in which the grateful saints recorded their thankfulness. Who can look without pleasure upon the altar which Noah reared after his preservation from the universal deluge? Have not our eyes often sparkled as we have thought of Abraham building the altar and calling it, "Jehovah-Jireh, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen"? Have we not read, with intense satisfaction, of Jacob setting up the stone which had been his pillow, pouring oil upon it, and calling upon the name of the Lord, naming the place Bethel, though the name thereof was Luz at the first?

Who has failed to rejoice in the martial music of Miriam's timbrel, and the glorious notes of Moses' song at the Red Sea? And have we not paused and looked at the twelve stones set up in the midst of Jordan by good old Joshua when Jordan was driven back, that the hosts of Israel might go through dry-shod? Surely, Brothers and Sisters, we have rejoiced in this stone which Samuel set up and called Ebenezer? And, in looking upon all the various ways in which the saints of God have recorded His loving kindness of old, we have felt a satisfaction in beholding the perpetuity of God's Glory, since one generation shows forth to another all His mighty acts.

Oh, would it not be quite as pleasant and more profitable *for us* to record the mighty acts of the Lord as we have seen them? Should not we set up the altar unto His name, or weave His mercies into a song? Should we not take the pure gold of thankfulness, the jewels of praise, and make them into another crown for the head of Jesus? Ought not our souls to give forth music as sweet and exhilarating as ever came from David's harp? Ought not the feet of our gratitude to trip as lightly as Miriam's when she led the daughters of Israel?

Have we not some means of praising God? Are there no methods by which we may set forth the gratitude we feel within? I trust we can make an offering unto our Lord. We can entertain our Beloved with the spiced wine of our pomegranate, and the choice drops of our honeycomb. I hope that this day our souls may suggest unto themselves some way in which we may record the Lord's mighty deeds and hand down to coming generations our testimony of His faithfulness and of His Truth.

In the spirit of these two observations then, looking at God's hand in our own life, and acknowledging that hand with some record of thankfulness, I, your minister, brought by Divine Grace to preach this morning the five hundredth of my printed sermons, consecutively published week by week, set up my stone of Ebenezer to God. I thank Him, thank Him humbly, but yet most joyfully for all the help and assistance given in studying and preaching the Word of God to these mighty congregations by my

voice, and afterwards to so many nations through the press. I set up my pillar in the form of this sermon. My motto this day shall be the same as Samuel's, "Up to now, the Lord has helped me."

And as the stone of my praise is much too heavy for me to set it upright alone, I ask you, my comrades in the day of battle, my fellow laborers in the vineyard of Christ, to join with me in expressing gratitude, while together we set up the stone of memorial and say, "Up to now the Lord has helped us."

This morning there are three things I want to talk about—three, yet only one—this stone of help was suggestive as to *the place of its erection*, as to *the occasion of its setting up*, and as to *the inscription which it bore*.

I. First, then, much valuable instruction, much excitement to devout thankfulness may be found in THE SPOT WHERE THE STONE OF EBENEZER WAS SET UP.

Twenty years before on that field Israel was routed. Twenty years before, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were slain upon that ground, and the ark of the Lord was taken when the Philistines triumphed. It was well that they should remember the defeat they had sustained, and that amidst the joyous victory they should recollect that the battle had been turned into a defeat unless the Lord had been upon their side.

Brethren, let us remember our defeats. Have we forgotten when we went out in our own strength, determined to subdue our corruptions, and found ourselves weak as water? Have you forgotten when you reposed in the ark of the Lord, when you rested in ceremonies, and ordinances, and *not* in the Rock of your salvation? Have you forgotten, I say, how you were perplexed before your sins, and found no place of refuge from your adversaries? Have we forgotten our pitiful failures in preaching, and prayer—when we waited not upon God for strength?

O those times of groaning, when none have believed our report because the Lord's arm was not revealed! I call to remembrance all my failures as I stand on this hill of joy. I doubt not that on the field of Ebenezer there were the graves of thousands who had been slain in fight. Let the graves of our past proud notions, the graves of our self-confidence, the graves of our creature-strength and boasting, stir us up to praise the Lord who has up to now helped us. Perhaps on that spot there stood a trophy raised by the insulting Philistines. Oh, let the remembrance of the boasting of the adversary, when he said, "Aha! Aha!" Let that come into our ears to sweeten the shout of triumph while we glorify the God of Israel.

Have you done anything for God? You would have done nothing without Him. Look to your former defeats. Do you return victorious? You would have returned with your garments trailed in the mire and your shield dishonored, if God had not been upon your side. Oh, you that have proven your weakness, perhaps by some terrible fall, or in some sad disappointment—let the recollection of the spot where you were vanquished constrain you the more to praise the Lord—who has helped you even to this day to triumph over your adversaries!

The field between Mizpeh and Shen would also refresh their memories concerning *their sins*, for it was sin that conquered them. Had not their hearts been captured by sin—their land had never been captured by Philistia. Had they not turned their backs upon their God, they would not have turned their backs in the day of conflict. Brethren, let us recollect our sins! They will serve as a black foil on which the mercy of God shall glisten the more brightly. Egypt's fertility is the more wonderful because of its nearness to the Libyan sands—which would cover it altogether if it were not for the Nile.

That God should be so good is marvelous, but that He should be so good to *you* and to *me*, who are so rebellious, is a miracle of miracles. I know not a word which can express the surprise and wonder our souls ought to feel at God's goodness to us. Our hearts playing the harlot—our lives far from perfect. Our faith almost blown out—our unbelief often prevailing. Our pride lifting up its accursed head—our patience a poor sickly plant, almost nipped by one night's frost. Our courage little better than cowardice, our love lukewarmness—our ardor but as ice.

Oh, my dear Brothers and Sisters, if we will but think, anyone of us, what a mass of sin we are! If we will but reflect that we are, after all, as one of the fathers writes, "walking dunghills," we should, indeed, be surprised that the sun of Divine Grace should continue so perpetually to shine upon us. What amazing Grace that the abundance of Heaven's mercy should be revealed in us. Oh, Lord, when we recollect what we might have been, and what we really have been, we must say, "Glory be unto the gracious and merciful God who up to now has helped us."

Again, that spot would remind them *of their sorrows*. What a mournful chapter in Israel's history is that which follows their defeat by the Philistines. Good old Eli, you remember, fell backward and broke his neck. His daughter-in-law, in the pangs of her travail, cried, concerning her child, "Call him Ichabod, for the Glory has departed, because the Ark of the Lord is taken." Their harvests were snatched away by the robbers. Their vintage was gleaned for them by alien hands. Israel had twenty years of deep and bitter sorrow. They might have said with David, "We went through fire and through water. Men did ride over our heads."

Well, Friends, let the remembrance of *our sorrows* also inspire *us* with a more profound thankfulness while we erect the stone of Ebenezer. We have had our sorrows as a Church. Shall I remind you of our black and dark day? Never erased from our memory can be the time of our affliction and trial. Death came into our windows, and dismay into our hearts. Did not all men speak ill of us? Who would give us a good word? The Lord Himself afflicted us and broke us as in the day of His anger—so it seemed to us, then.

Ah, God, You know how great have been the results which flowed from that terrible calamity, but from our souls the memory never can be taken, not even in Heaven itself in the recollection of that night of confusion, and those long weeks of slander and abuse. Let us roll a great stone before the Lord and let us write thereon, "Up to now the Lord has helped us." Little, I suppose, did the devil get by that master-stroke. Small was the triumph

which he earned by that piece of malice. Greater multitudes than ever flocked to listen to the Word of God, and some here who otherwise might never have attended the preaching of the Gospel, remain as living monuments of God's power to save.

Of all evil things out of which good has arisen, we can always point to the Surrey Hall catastrophe as one of the greatest goods which ever befell this neighborhood, notwithstanding the sorrows which it brought. This one fact is but a sample of others—for it is the Lord's rule to bring good out of evil—and so to prove His wisdom and magnify His Grace. O you that have come from beds of languishing, you that have been bowed down with doubt and fear, and you that have been poverty-stricken, or slandered, or apparently deserted by your God—if this day the glory of God's Grace rests upon you—pile the stones, and anoint the pillar, and write thereon, "Ebenezer, up to now the Lord has helped us."

While dwelling upon the peculiarity of the locality, we must remark, that, as it had been the spot of their defeat, their sin, their sorrow—so now before the victory—it was the place of *their repentance*. You see, Beloved, they came together to repent, to confess their sins, to put away their false gods, to cast Ashtaroth from their houses and from their hearts. It was there that they saw God's hand and were led to say, "Up to now has the Lord helped us."

When you and I are most diligent in hunting sin, then God will be most valiant in routing our foes. You look to the work within, and overcome sin, and God will look to the work without, and overcome your troubles and your trials for you. Ah, dear Friends, as we pile that stone thinking how God has helped us, let us shed tears of sorrow to think how ungrateful we have been! On earth penitence and praise must always sing together. Just as in some of our tunes there are two or three parts, we shall always need repentance to take the bass notes while we are here, while faith in praise can mount up to the very highest notes of the Divine gamut of gratitude.

Yes, with our joy for pardoned guilt we mourn that we pierced the Lord, and with our joy for strengthened Graces and ripening experience, we must mourn over ingratitude and unbelief. Up to now the Lord has helped you, and yet you did once say, "My God has forgotten me." Up to now the Lord has helped you, and yet you did murmur and complain against Him. Up to now the Lord has helped you, and yet you did once deny Him like Peter. Up to now the Lord has helped you and yet your eyes have gone astray after vanity, and your hands have touched sin, and your heart has played the wanton. Let us repent, my Brothers and Sisters, for it is through our tears that we shall best perceive the beauty of these grateful words, "Up to now has the Lord helped us."

You must remember, too, that Ebenezer was the place of *lamentation after the Lord*. They came together to pray God to return to them. We shall surely see God when we long after Him. How delightful it is to see a Church earnest after revivals—crying—pleading for God to come into her midst. When you know, Brothers and Sisters, that without God your ordinances are nothing, when you cannot rest satisfied with the dead, dry letter, but really want to have the power and the presence of God, then it

will not be long before you have it. So while you and I express gratitude for the past, let us breathe another prayer to God for renewed Grace. If you personally have lost the light of His face, pray this morning—

**“Return, O holy Dove! return,
Sweet messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made You mourn,
And drove You from my breast.”**

And if it is the entire Church, and in any measure, our love that has grown cold, and the converting and sanctifying Spirit has departed, let us pray also the same prayer—

**“Savior, visit Your plantation;
Grant us, Lord, a gracious rain!
All will come to desolation,
Unless You return again;
Lord, revive us,
All our help must come from You!”**

The place of revival should be the place of gracious thankfulness.

On that day, too, Mizpeh was the place of *renewed covenant*, and its name signifies the *watchtower*. These people, I say, came together to renew their Covenant with God, and wait for Him as upon a watchtower. Whenever God’s people look back upon the past, they should renew their Covenant with God. Put your hands into the hands of Christ anew, you saint of the Most High, and give yourself to Him again. Climb your watchtower and watch for the coming of your Lord. See whether there is sin within you, temptation without you—duty neglected or lethargy creeping over you. Come to Mizpeh, the watchtower! Come to Mizpeh the place of the renewal of the Covenant, and then set up your stone and say, “Up to now, the Lord has helped us.”

It seems to me that the spot where Samuel said, “Ebenezer,” was exceedingly similar in many respects to the position occupied by us this day. I do not think the children of Israel could with heartier joy say “Ebenezer!” than we can. We have had many sins, a share of sorrows, and some defeats by reason of our own folly. I hope we have humbled ourselves before God. I hope we will lament after Him, and desire to behold Him. I pray we may desire to dwell very near Him, and that our soul does bless His name while we renew the Covenant again this day. And while we come to the watchtower and wait to hear what God, the Lord, will speak unto us. come, then, all in this great house which the Lord’s favor has built for us, let us sing together, “Up to now the Lord has helped us.”

II. We now change the subject to look at the OCCASION OF THE ERECTION OF THIS MEMORIAL.

The tribes had assembled unarmed to worship. The Philistines, hearing of their gathering, suspected a revolt. A rising was not at that time contemplated, though no doubt there was lurking in the hearts of the people a hope that they would somehow or other be delivered. The Philistines being as a nation, far inferior in numbers, to the children of Israel, had the natural suspiciousness of weak oppressors. If we must have tyrants, let them be strong ones, for they are never so jealous or cruel as those little despots who are always afraid of rebellion.

Hearing that the people had come together, the Philistines determined to attack them—to attack an unarmed company, mark you—who had come together for worship. The people were alarmed, and naturally they might be. Samuel, however, the Prophet of God, was equal to the occasion. He bade them bring a lamb. I do not know that the lamb was offered according to the Levitical rites, yet Prophets in all ages had a right to dispense with ordinary laws. This was to show that the legal dispensation was not permanent, that there was something higher than the Aaronic priesthood—so that Samuel and Elijah, men in whom God expressly dwelt—were mightier than the ordinary officiating priests of the sanctuary.

He takes the lamb, puts it on the altar, offers it, and as it smokes to Heaven he offers prayer. The voice of man is answered by the voice of God—a great thunder dismays the Philistines and they are put to rout. We, I think, have been in similar circumstances. Hear the parallel. The victory obtained was *by the lamb*. As soon as the lamb was slaughtered, and the smoke went up to Heaven, the blessing began to descend upon the Israelites and the curse upon the foes. “They smote them”—note the words—they “smote them until they came under Bethcar,” which, being interpreted, signifies “the house of the lamb.”

At the offering of the lamb the Israelites began to fight the Philistines and slew them even to the house of the lamb. Brethren, if we have done anything for Christ, if we have achieved any victories, if in this house any souls have been converted, any hearts sanctified, any drooping spirits comforted—bear witness that it has been all through the Lamb. When we have pictured Christ slaughtered, have described the agonies which He endured upon the Cross—when we have tried to preach fully though feebly the great doctrine of His substitutionary Sacrifice—have set Him forth as the Propitiation for sins, then it is that the victories have begun.

And when we have preached Christ ascending up on high, leading captivity captive, and when we have glorified in the fact that He ever lives to make intercession for us, and that He shall come to judge the quick and dead—if any good has been accomplished it has been through the Lamb—the Lamb slain, or else the Lamb exalted. Hark, dear Friends, as we pile our Ebenezer this morning, we do it honoring Him. “Unto the Lamb once slain be glory forever and ever.” You have overcome your foes, you have slaughtered your sins, you have mastered your troubles.

How has it been? From the altar of that bleeding Lamb, onward to the Throne of Him who is to reign forever and ever, the whole road has been stained with the crimson blood of your enemies—you have overcome through the blood of the Lamb. The Lamb shall overcome you. He that rides on the white horse goes before us. His name is the Lamb. And all the saints shall follow Him on the white horses, going forth conquering and to conquer. “Ebenezer, up to now the Lord has helped us.” But the help has always been through the Lamb, the bleeding, the living, the reigning Lamb.

As in this occurrence the sacrifice was exalted, so also was the *power of prayer acknowledged*. The Philistines were not routed except by prayer.

Samuel prayed unto the Lord. They said, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord for us." Brethren, let us bear our witness this morning that if anything of good has been accomplished here, it has been the result of prayer. Often have I solaced my heart by the recollection of the prayers offered in our former house of meeting at New Park Street. What supplications have I heard there—what groans of wrestling spirits! There were times when I has not had the heart to say a word, because your prayers to God melted me.

Your supplications stopped my utterance, and I could only pronounce a benediction and send you away, because the Spirit of God was so present it was hardly the time to speak to man, but only to speak to God. I do not think we always have the same spirit of prayer here, and yet in this I must and will rejoice—I know not where the spirit of prayer is to be found more in exercise than in this place. I know you hold up my hands, you that are like Aaron and Hur upon the mountains. I know that you intercede with God for the conversion of this neighborhood and the evangelization of this great city.

Young and old, you strive together that the kingdom may come, and the Lord's will may be done. But, oh, we must not forget as we look upon this vast Church—two thousand and more members walking in the fear of God—we must not forget that this increase came as the result of *prayer*, and that it is in prayer, still, that our strength must be. I charge you before the Most High, never depend upon my ministry. What am I? What is there in me? I speak, and when God speaks through me, I speak with a power unknown to men in whom the Spirit dwells not.

But if He leaves me, I am not only as weak as other men, but less than they, for I have no wisdom of years. I have no human learning, I have taken no degree in the university and wear no titles of learned honor. If God speaks by me, He must have all the glory. If He saves souls by such a frail being, He must have all the glory. Give unto the Lord glory and strength—lay every particle of the honor at His feet. But do continue to pray, do plead with God for me that His power may still be seen, His arm still put mightily to His work. Prayer honored must be recollected when we set up the Ebenezer and say, "Up to now the Lord has helped us."

Again, as there was prayer and sacrifice, you must remember that in answer to the sweet savor of the lamb, and the sweet perfume of Samuel's intercession, *Jehovah came forth* to rout His foes. I read not that Israel shouted a war cry. No, their shouts would not have been heard amid those great thunders. I find that they dashed to battle. But it was not their bow, their spear, or their sword that gained the victory. Listen, my Brothers and Sisters, the voice of God is heard! Crash! Crash! Where are you now, you sons of Anak! The heavens shake, the earth rocks, the everlasting hills do bow, the birds of the air fly to the forest to hide themselves, the timid goats upon the mountains seek the clefts of the rocks.

Peal on peal of the thunders roll till mountain answers mountain in loud uproar of affright. From crag to crag leaps the live lightning and the Philistines are all but blinded by it—and stand aghast—and then take to their heels and fly. Quit yourselves like men, O Philistines, that you be not

servants to the Hebrews. Quit yourselves like men, but unless you are gods, you must tremble now. Where are your bucklers and the bosses thereof? Where are your spears, and the sheen thereof? Now let your swords flash from their scabbards! Now send out your giants and their armor-bearers! Now let your Goliaths defy the Lord God of Hosts!

Aha! Aha! You have become like women, you quake! You faint! Look, look! They turn their backs and fly before the men of Israel, whom they counted but as slaves. They flee! The warrior flies, and the stout heart quails, and the mighty man flies like a timid dove to his hiding place. "Glory be unto the Lord God of Israel, His own right hand, and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory."

Beloved, if anything of good has been accomplished, or if you and I have routed sin, how has it been? Not by *our* strength, not by *our* power, but by the glorious voice of God. When the Gospel is truly preached it is God thundering. It may sound as feebly as a child's voice when we tell of Jesus crucified, but it is God thundering and I tell you, Sirs, the thunders of God never so smote the heart of the Philistines as the Gospel of Christ does the heart of convicted sinners. When we preach and God blesses it, it is God's lightning, it is God's flashes of Divine fire, the glitter of His spear.

Never were Philistines so smitten with the blaze of lightning in their faces, as sinners are when God's Law and Gospel flash into their dark eyes. But to God be the glory—to God—to God—to God alone! Not a word for man, not a syllable for the son of man. "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be glory." This is the song of perfect saints above. Shall it not be the song of imperfect ones below? "Not unto us, not unto us," the seraphs cry as they veil their faces with their wings, and cast their crowns at Jehovah's feet. "Not unto us, not unto us," must we say while we exult in His power and magnify the God of our salvation.

III. This was the occasion then. I need not tarry longer, but turn at once to THE INSCRIPTION UPON THE MEMORIAL, "Ebenezer, up to now the Lord has helped us." The inscription may be read in three ways.

You must read, first of all, its central word, the word on which all the sense depends, where the fullness of it gathers. "Up to now the LORD has helped us." Note, Beloved, that they did not stand still and refuse to use their weapons, but while God was thundering they were fighting—and while the lightning were dashing in the enemy's eyes—they were making them feel the potency of their steel. So that while we glorify God we are not to deny or to discard human agency. *We* must fight because God fights for us. We must strike, but the power to strike, and the result of striking must all come from Him.

You see they did not say, "Up to now our sword has helped us, up to now Samuel has encouraged us." No, no: "up to now the Lord has helped us." Now you must admit that everything truly great must be of the Lord. You cannot suppose a thing so great as the conversion of sinners. The revival of a Church can never be man's work. You see the Thames when the tide is ebbing—what a long reach of foul, putrid mud—but the tide returns. Poor Sinner, you who thought the river would run out till it was all

dry, and the ships be left aground—look, the flood comes back again, joyfully filling up the stream once more.

But you are quite certain that so large a river as the Thames is not to be flooded except by ocean's tides. So you cannot see great results and ascribe them to man. Where there is little work done, men often take the credit themselves, but where there is great work done, they dare not. If Simon Peter had been angling over the side of his ship and had caught a fine fish, he might have said, "Well done, fisherman!" But when the boat was full of fish, so that it began to sink, he could not think of himself then. No, down he goes with, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

The greatness of our work compels us to confess that it must be of God, it must be of the Lord alone. And, dear Friends, it must be so if we consider the little with which we began. Jacob said, as he came over Jordan, "With my staff I crossed this Jordan, but now am I become two bands." Surely his becoming two bands must be of God, for he had nothing but his staff. And do you not remember some few of you here present one morning when we crossed this Jordan with a staff? Were we a hundred when first I addressed you? What hosts of empty pews, what a miserable handful of hearers. With the staff we crossed that Jordan.

But God has multiplied the people, and multiplied the joy, till we have become not only two bands but many bands. And many this day are gathering to hear the Gospel preached by the sons of this Church, begotten of us and sent forth by us to minister the Word of Life in many towns and villages throughout these three kingdoms, Glory be unto God, this cannot be man's work. What effort made by the unaided strength of man will equal this which has been accomplished by God? Let the name of the Lord, therefore, be inscribed upon the pillar of the memorial. I am always very jealous about this matter. If we do not, as a Church and a congregation, if we do not as individuals always give God the glory, it is utterly impossible that God should work by us.

Many wonders I have seen, but I never saw, yet, a man who arrogated the honor of God's work to himself, whom God did not leave sooner or later. Nebuchadnezzar said, "Behold, this great Babylon that I have built." Behold that poor lunatic whose hair has grown like eagle's feathers, and his nails like bird's claws—that is Nebuchadnezzar. And that must be you, and that must be I, each in our own way, unless we are content always to give all the glory unto God. Surely, Brothers and Sisters, we shall be a stench in the nostrils of the Most High—an offense, even like carrion, before the Lord of Hosts, if we arrogate to ourselves any honor.

What does God send His saints for? That they may be demigods? Did God make men strong that they may exalt themselves into His Throne? What? Does the King of kings crown you with mercies that you may pretend to lord it over Him? What? Does He dignify you that you may usurp the prerogatives of His Throne? No. You must come with all the favors and honors that God has put upon you, and crawl to the foot of His Throne and say, What am I, and what is my father's house that You have remembered me. "Up to now the Lord has helped us."

I said this text might be read three ways. We have read it once by laying stress upon the center word. Now it ought to be read *looking backward*. The word, “up to now,” seems like a hand pointing in that direction. Look back, look back. Twenty years—thirty—forty—fifty—sixty—seventy—eighty—“up to now!” Say *that* each of you. Through poverty—through wealth—through sickness—through health—at home—abroad—on the land—on the sea—in honor—in dishonor—in perplexity—in joy—in trial—in triumph—in prayer—in temptation—up to now. Put the whole together!

I like sometimes to look down a long avenue of trees. It is very delightful to gaze from end to end of the long vista, a sort of leafy temple with its branching pillars, and its arches of leaves. Cannot you look down the long aisles of *your* years—look at the green boughs of mercy overhead—and the strong pillars of loving kindness and faithfulness which bear your joys? Are there no birds in yonder branches singing? Surely, there must be many. And the bright sunshine and the blue sky yonder. And if you turn round in the far distance, you may see Heaven’s brightness, and a throne of gold. “Up to now! Up to now!”

Then the text may be read a third way—*looking forward*. For when a man gets up to a certain mark and writes, “up to now,” he looks back upon much that is past, but “up to now” is not the end—there is yet a distance to be traversed. More trials, more joys, more temptations, more triumphs, more prayers, more answers, more toils, more strength, more fights, more victories, more slanders, more comforts, more lions and bears to be fought, more tearing of the lion for God’s Davids, more deep waters, more high mountains, more troops of devils, more hosts of angels. And then come sickness, old age, disease, death. Is it over now? No, no, no! We will raise one stone more when we get into the river, we will shout Ebenezer there—“up to now the Lord has helped us,” for there is more to come.

An awakening in His likeness, climbing of starry spheres, harps, songs, palms, white raiment, the face of Jesus, the society of saints, the glory of God, the fullness of eternity, the infinity of bliss. Yes, as sure as God has helped so far as today, He will help us to the close. “I will never leave you, I will never forsake you. I have been with you, and I will be with you to the end.” Courage, Brothers and Sisters! And as we pile the stones, saying, “Up to now the Lord has helped us,” let us just gird up the loins of our mind and be sober and hope to the end for the Divine Grace that is to be revealed in us—for as it has been—so it shall be world without end.

I want some oil to pour on this pillar—I want some oil. Jacob poured oil upon it, and called upon the name of the Lord. Where shall I get my oil? Grateful hearts, have you any oil? Prayerful spirits, have you any? Companions of Jesus, have you any? You that commune with Him day and night, have you any? Pour it out, then. Break your alabaster boxes, oh you Marys! Pour out your prayers this morning with mine. Offer your thanksgivings with my grateful expressions of thanks. Come, each of you, pour this oil upon the top of this Ebenezer today.

I want some oil, I wonder whether I shall get it from yonder heart. “Oh,” says one, “my heart is as a flinty rock.” I read in Scripture that the Lord

brought oil out of the flinty rock. Oh, if there should be a soul led to believe in Christ this morning—if some heart would give itself up to Christ today! Why not so? Why not? The Holy Spirit can melt flint and move mountains. Young man, how long are we to preach to you? How long to invite you? How long to pain you? How long to entreat you? To implore you? Shall this be the day that you will yield?

Do you say, “I am nothing?” Christ is everything. Take Him, trust Him. I know not a better way of celebrating this day of Ebenezer, and thanksgiving, than by some hearts this day accepting the marriage ring of Christ’s love, and being affianced unto the Son of God forever and ever. God grant it may be so. It shall be so if you pray for it, O true hearts. And unto God be glory forever. Amen.—

**“Great God, we sing that mighty hand,
By which supported still we stand,
The opening year your mercy shows,
Let mercy crown it till it close.
By day, by night, at home, abroad,
Still we are guarded by our God,
By His incessant bounty fed,
By His unerring counsel led.
With grateful hearts the past we own,
The future, all to us unknown,
We to Your guardian care commit,
And peaceful leave before Your feet.
In scenes exalted or depressed,
Be You our joy and You our rest.
Your goodness all our hopes shall raise,
Adored through all our changing days.
When death shall interrupt these songs,
And seal in silence mortal tongues,
Our helper God, in whom we trust,
In better worlds our souls shall boast.”**

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THREE DECISIVE STEPS NO. 2220

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
SEPTEMBER 6, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 8, 1891.**

***“And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath Jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. And Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve Him only: and He will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only. And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray to the Lord for you.”
1 Samuel 7:2-5.***

Two enemies held Israel in subjection. The Philistines had fought against them and defeated them, even though they sent to Shiloh and brought the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of Jehovah's Presence, into their camp. The Lord was not with them, so they were smitten with a great slaughter. The crowning disaster of the day was “the Ark of God was taken.” The Philistines carried it away to Ashdod and set it in the house of Dagon, their idol. You remember how God, jealous for His honor and Glory, worked mighty wonders, causing Dagon to fall and inflicting punishment on every city where the ark came, until, at last, the Philistines, wearied with their trials, sent the Ark back to the people on whose behalf Jehovah had shown Himself so strong. Twenty years the Ark abode at Kirjath Jearim and, during all that time, Israel was under the hand of the Philistines.

But a worse enemy than the Philistines held sway over the land. Though the Ark had returned, the people had gone away from their God and had set up the abominable worship of Baal and Astarte, the idols of the Phoenicians and other heathen nations by whom they were surrounded. I will not stay to explain to you about these gods. Suffice it to say that the Baalim were the male gods and the Ashtaroth the female—and that worship of these idols was attended with great lewdness and filthiness—in fact, the holy things of Baal and Astarte we would call obscene and degrading. The people were thus in double bondage. The heavy yoke of the Philistines was upon them because the heavier burden of a false worship crushed out the life of their hearts.

It may very naturally be asked, “Where was Samuel all that time?” I know not what he was doing during those 20 years, but I have a suspicion. I will say I have a firm *persuasion* that he was going from place to place, preaching in quiet spots wherever he could gather an audience, warning the people of their sin and stirring them up to seek Jehovah, thus endeavoring to infuse some spirituality into their national life. But “the time was long.” He plowed and seemed to plow a rock. For 20 years the good man spoke. For 20 years he acted like a battering ram upon a wall that did not seem to tremble beneath his strokes. For 20 years he went up and down, fleeing for his life from the Philistines, but venturing out, whenever he had an opportunity, to warn a household or a village group, or, perhaps, a township, that they could only be delivered from the Philistines by seeking God—that they had come into their present evil case by forsaking Jehovah and, that, unless they came back to the worship of the only true God, they would never again have their liberties.

“The time was long,” very long, for him to keep on speaking, warning a people who did not seem to care for his message. But constant dripping wears away stones and, at last, the inert mass against which he had battered began to move and there arose a general feeling of enquiry all over the country—“all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.” Then was Samuel’s time to strike, while the iron was hot! He had spent 20 years in getting it hot and he did not miss the opportunity when, at last, it came! He pleaded with the people and plainly showed them the only way in which they could expect help—namely, by putting away their false gods and returning with prepared hearts to the service of Jehovah.

That the continual prayers and efforts of Samuel were crowned with success should encourage all those who, in days of unfaithfulness and apostasy, still lift up their voices for the Truth of God! Keep pegging away, my Brothers, though the people may seem to be indifferent to your message, or stiffen their necks against it. Do not give up though in the service of the base idols they seem wholly to forget God! The Lord will yet arise in His own good time and His cause shall triumph! Prepare a way for Him, of whom it is written, “Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power.” Now, I believe that my case, with regard to some to whom I am speaking, is something like that of Samuel. I have, at least, the same message to deliver.

I hope to be able to make this plain by showing you, first, that *these people were in a very hopeful condition*. That, secondly, *they were called upon to take very decided steps*. And, thirdly, *that they were helped to do so by faith*. True, it was faith in *Samuel*—and you get much more help if you have faith in a greater than Samuel who is still here among us, even our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

I. First, then, **THESE PEOPLE WERE IN A VERY HOPEFUL CONDITION**. “All the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.” What does it mean?

It means, first, that they were *greatly oppressed*. Their goods were taken from them. They were beaten. They saw their children slain. They were the slaves of the Philistines and, therefore, they began to say, “Why

should we not return to our God? When we were true to Jehovah, there were no Philistines to trouble us. They were put to rout when we served God. It was better with us then, than now. Samson, when the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, slew a thousand of them with the jawbone of an ass. Oh, for a day of Samson back again! Oh, for a day of God back again!" Their oppressions made them think of God.

Do I not address some whose many troubles are compelling them to think of God? All went well with you, once, and then you were an atheist. Troubles are multiplying, now, and atheism does not suit you. You have buried those you loved. Ah, the grass has not yet grown on that newly-formed grave and your heart is aching after something, you scarcely know what! There were days with you, perhaps, in your youth, when you knelt at your mother's knee—and in your early manhood, when you went to the House of God and seemed to be one of God's people. You sigh as you think of happier days—but all goes wrong with you, now, and a voice seems to say to you, especially in the still of night, "Return, return, return!" You have wandered, like a sheep, from the pasture to the desert, from the shepherd's care into danger from the wolf. May God grant that you may, in this way, begin to lament after the Lord!

I think that by the house of Israel lamenting after the Lord, is meant, next, that they began to be *inwardly convinced that nobody could help them but the Lord*. "Ah," said one, "would God these Philistines were driven away!" "Ah," said his companion, "nobody can do it but Jehovah." And then the first one answered, "Then, would that Jehovah were here! Oh, for His mighty hand and His terrible power to drive away our enemies!" "Israel lamented after the Lord." Samuel had taught them to some purpose, seeing that when they saw their need, they did not look for help to him, but to his Master. Some teachers attract attention to themselves and are like the moon when it shines—everybody says, "What a beautiful moon!" The true Prophet of God shines like the sun and people do not say, "What a beautiful sun!" but, "How lovely is the landscape!" Let it be your ambition to so declare the Word of God that people will not say, "What a splendid preacher!" but, "How glorious is his Christ!"

No man must come between the seeker and God, for the best of men are but men at their best. Not even the ordinances of religion can meet the need of the people, though they are God-appointed—they were meant to lead us *to* God—and not to be a substitute for Him! When the Philistines triumphed, as we read in the fourth chapter, the elders of Israel said, "Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when *it* comes among us, *it* may save us out of the hand of our enemies." And lo, when *it* came, it did *not* save them! When people trust in the religious symbol instead of the spiritual power, they are idolaters in heart and invite disaster!

But the house of Israel did not lament after the Ark—they lamented after the Lord, without whose Glory, shining between the cherubim, even the Ark was void and valueless! Am I speaking to one who has come to this conviction—"Nobody can help me but God. I am so down at the heel, so broken in spirit, I am brought into such a condition, that unless the

heavens are rent and the right hand of God appears, there is no rescue for me”? I am right glad you are brought into that condition! There is much gained when you look away from all others and from all else, to God. Say now, “I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from where comes my help. My help comes from the Lord who made Heaven and earth.” And if your soul still sighs, “Oh, that He would help me! Oh, that it were true that He did hear me and would come to my rescue!”—remember His words, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”

In some such case were the people of Israel and when it says that they, “lamented after the Lord,” it seems to me that, while they desired Him, *they were afraid that He would not deliver them*. They prayed after a fashion, but there was a dash of doubt about it. So have I known many go up to their closet to pray and they have said, “O God, if so vile a sinner can be forgiven, if there is such a thing as salvation for a backslider, if sins like mine can be washed away, oh, that I might be saved!” They have prayed with an, “if,” and a, “perhaps” and a, “maybe”—lamenting after the Lord with many a moan, sigh, cry of despair—and then, just a little *drop* or two of hope! Lamenting after the Lord—I do not quite know how to describe it. But I know the distressing condition very well—that state in which the soul feels it needs God and would give anything to be saved, is willing to submit to Him and is anxious to be forgiven, but always is haunted with the dark thought—“It is not for you. He will never stretch His arms of mercy so far as to reach you. You are outside the Covenant! You are past hope.” Still, even though this is a very dark state of mind to be in, it is a hopeful state of mind. It is much better than presumption or carelessness.

Moreover, *these people had very little hope but they had very much desire*. “They lamented after the Lord.” I suppose their lamentation after the Lord was in this fashion—“Oh, that God would be our God! But then He never will. Oh, that He would deliver us from the Philistines! But then He never will.” Their prayer was damp for lack of faith. Their tinder would not burn. They did not rejoice to believe in the Lord, but they “lamented” after Him—they kept sorrowing and sighing, moaning and crying—needing Him, but never coming to Him. I know that I now address some who have regularly attended the preaching of the Gospel for years. You are not without a sense of sin. You are not without anxious desires. You are not without very anxious feelings at times. Sometimes you would give your eyes that you might know Christ and you feel as if you could willingly die if you could but know that you were saved. But, still, you cannot believe it possible—and that doubt still hangs over you. But it is possible! It is *more* than possible! It is absolutely *certain* that he who believes in Christ has everlasting life and he that comes to Him, He will in no wise cast out! He is ready to forgive. He delights in mercy. He overflows with compassion. “If you seek Him, He will be found of you.” Your lamentations after the Lord may be sweetened with a good hope that, coming to Him, He will accept you!

If you read the third verse, you will see that, all this while, *they had not parted with their idols*. They lamented after the Lord, but they did not get

the Lord because they wanted to have the Lord and to have their idols, too. There are men in the world who want to go to Heaven, but they want to stay on the road to Hell! They would get to the north by traveling to the south. There are some who would go home to their Father, but they would like to take the swine, the swine troughs and the husks with them! A pretty sight, that prodigal would have been, would he not, driving the hogs and carrying the hog troughs on his back, to his father's house? Such a picture is not to be imagined. It never existed in fact and never can. John Bunyan tells us that when he was playing at the game of "cat," one Sunday, on Elstow Green, as he was going to strike the cat with his stick, he thought he heard a voice, crying, "Will you keep your sins, and go to Hell; or will you give up your sins and go to Heaven?"

That question, without an angel's voice, you may hear at this moment! I put it now to some of you who would like to keep your sins and yet go to Heaven! You lament after the Lord. You would be a saint, but then you want to be a sinner, too. You would be a child of God, but then you would not like to turn out of the devil's family. You would not like to be ridiculed by the world. No, you want the crown without the cross! You want the end without the way. You want Heaven without holiness and forgiveness without repentance—and this can never be. It is useless lamenting after the Lord if it does not lead you to give up your idols!

One thing, however, was meant by this lamenting after the Lord. It meant that *they could never rest till God returned*. Some of you have tried many ways to get rest. Some years ago you got harpooned at a meeting and though, like a big whale, you have dragged out miles of line and gone to the bottom of the sea of sin, the harpoon still sticks in you! I know what you have been doing to get rest. You have tried the world and now there is nothing there that pleases you. You have tried sticking to business, but you are unsatisfied. You have made money, but you are a poorer man than you were when you began business! Poorer, really, than when you had not a penny to bless yourself with! In fact, you have not a penny that *does* bless you—all your pennies seem curses as they come in.

And then you have tried philosophy. Oh, you are a wonderfully wise man, especially when you have just read a book full of infidelity! Then you are wiser than two Solomons rolled into one! And yet you are a fool and you know you are, for you cannot get any peace by that means. You try, sometimes, to talk big blasphemies, and that is because you are afraid. As boys will whistle when they go through the churchyard, and are afraid of ghosts, they whistle to keep their courage up. And some people talk very big things just to keep up their confidence—a confidence which they really do not possess, for they are dreadful cowards when they come to die! I wonder what you will try next? Will you try dissipation? Will you try drunkenness? Will you try the use of drugs? Well, well, if God means to save you, you will never rest till you are anchored in the port of Christ's atoning Sacrifice.

Until you come to God by Jesus Christ, you shall never rest! You shall be weary of foot; you shall be weary of brain; you shall be sick at heart; you shall feel that life is not worth living; you shall feel darkness over all

your brightness and you shall taste bitterness in all your sweets. If God means to save you, He will make you lament after Him. He has lamented after you—you cost your Savior many a tear. You cost your Savior nailed hands and feet. You cost your Savior bloody sweat. You cost Him His death and He will not have you trifle where He is so in earnest—and if you will not come without strong measures, He will make you come!

You shall be like Noah's dove. The raven rested on the corpses, but the dove could not. For her there was no resting place—she must drop into the water and drown—but her weary wings, at last, bears her back to the ark! Noah opens the window, puts out his hand, takes her in his grasp and pulls her in unto him into the ark. Then was she peaceful and quiet. She had found her Noah—she had found her rest. And it is to be so with some of you, now. You may stand out against my Master, but He means to have you. I sometimes hear of persons getting very angry after a Gospel sermon—and I say to myself, "I am not sorry for it." Sometimes when we are fishing, the fish gets the hook into his mouth. He pulls hard at the line—if he were *dead*, he could not—but he is a live fish, worth the getting, and though he runs away, for a while, with the hook in his jaws, he cannot escape. His very wriggling and his anger show that he has got the hook and the hook has got him. Have the landing-net ready—we shall land him by-and-by! Give him more line—let him use up his strength and then we will land him—and he shall belong to Christ forever!

Some of you know well what all this means, so I need say no more upon this point.

II. Let us notice, next, that THESE PEOPLE WERE CALLED UPON TO TAKE THREE VERY DECIDED STEPS. See how plainly and decidedly Samuel puts the matter—"If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve Him only."

The first thing that they were to do was to "*put away the strange gods.*" They were to go home and break the images of Baal, tear down the vile statues of Astarte and smash them to pieces, whether they were private images, or public ones. They were to clear out the whole tribe of idols! Now, if we would come back to God, we must get rid of all our false confidences—

***"The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Your Throne
And worship only Thee."***

Every man seems to have a different idol. One has pride—he is so wonderfully good, so self-righteous! He has *never* done anything wrong. He is quite as good as a Christian and some better. He gives himself an excellent character. He could not have a better. If it were not for the name at the bottom, which is his own, he could get any situation with such a character as he has! But then, you see, he has given it to himself. You will have to give up that nonsense, for you have not a good character, after all, and when you stand in the Light of God, you will see yourself to be defiled from head to foot!

Another man's god is his *self-confidence*. Hear him talk. He understands everything! He does not need to be taught anything—and if there is anything in the Bible that he does not understand, why then he does not believe it! He knows better than God Almighty and the Holy Spirit! He can judge the Scriptures and tell you what they ought to be and he could have, himself, written a better book. So he says, sometimes, in his talk, or so he thinks. Ah, poor Soul! You will have to break that image of pride or it will be your ruin. Self-confidence, in all its shapes and forms, must be hurled down if God is to be set up in the heart!

Alas, there are some that have the images of Baal and Ashtaroth in the form of lust. Ah, you cannot keep your sin and go to Heaven! Unchastity, fornication, adultery, uncleanness of body—these must be given up! God is ready to forgive the harlot and the fornicator, but they must quit their sins once and for all and forever. You cannot lie in the sty and yet go home to your Father. This abominable thing must be totally given up and never thought of again, if you would be forgiven and saved.

Others, who are more respectable, have the god of covetousness. To make money, to save money, to grab, to grasp—for this they will grind the workman in his wages. For this they will cheat in the quantity or the quality of their goods. All sorts of tricks in trade will be performed that they may get rich. Now, covetousness is idolatry. If you worship a god of gold, you will perish as much as if you worshipped a god of mud! Oh, that we might have this god driven out of us and have a living, generous spirit implanted!

How many do I know, too, who have for an idol the god of drink! Old Bacchus sits astride not only the wine cask, but many a man's heart. The man, when sober and "all right," is what everybody calls, "a good fellow." But he must drink and when once he is drunk, then he is by no means a good fellow, but foul and vile in language and one knows not what he may do! Sir, you must quit strong drink if you would be saved. No drunkard has any inheritance in the Kingdom of God! Drunkenness must be given up, and chambering, and wantonness, and gluttony, and all the sins of the flesh! These gods must be broken. "Put away the strange gods from among you."

There are others I know whose strange god is malice. They cannot forgive. Perhaps even while sitting in the House of God they are saying, "Well, I can forgive everybody except my brother. He served me a very bad turn. I can never forgive him." Or, possibly, some are like the man who, when dying, told the priest that he forgave So-and-So for all the wrong he had done him—"That is," he said, "if I die. But if I get up again, I'll make him rue it." Are there not many whose forgiveness of injuries is of that kind? It is a mere sham! But there is no going to Heaven unless, frankly and unreservedly, you can forgive others their offenses. Why, you cannot even pray the Lord's Prayer unless you do so! "Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us." You cannot get through that prayer, much less get through the narrow gate, so long as malice is in your heart!

But I must not stay to enlarge here. Every man must discover his own idol, whatever it may be. And now let me most solemnly put it to each one of you—"If you will return unto the Lord with all your heart, then put away the strange gods that have ruled over you—and turn unto the Lord." That is the first decided step.

Are you saying, "Well, I will put away these evil things; I will give up these sins"? I am glad you have come to that. But when? Can you put them away now, just now, do you think? "I was thinking," says one, "I have an engagement tomorrow that will be rather bad." Can you not put the thing away tonight? "Well, I should like to have one indulgence of the flesh." Ah, Sir, you will never put these sins away till you go and do it straight away! That prodigal son got back to his father because he went off directly. He ran away! I do not know upon what terms his master had engaged him, whether it was by the quarter, or by the week, but this I know—he no sooner came to his senses than off he went and never stopped! He ran off instantly. You must run away from your old master without giving him any notice, for if you give him any warning, you will never get away at all! God help us to break the images here and now! Down with them, whatever they may be, and turn at once to the Lord!

Now, notice the next step of decision—"Put away the strange gods, and *prepare your hearts for the Lord.*" The mere outward reformation was not enough. They might have torn down every idol in the land and have been no nearer God for that. See, in France, today, how the people who have for long bent the knee in superstition and idolatry, have, many of them, flung away their vain worship only to sink into infidelity. What better are they, when they exalt the "Goddess of Reason" where before stood the altars of the Papacy, when the heart is untouched and God is not in all their thoughts? Still, there are many in that land, as, I trust, there are many here, who are lamenting after God and only await the preparation of the heart *which comes from Him*, to bow in allegiance before His Throne. What, then, is the way to prepare the heart?

The first thing is, confession of sin. The people said, "We have sinned against the Lord." Go and confess your sin unto God. The more particular you can be in that confession, the better. Go and acknowledge your iniquity with many sighs and tears—and with deep regret that you should have sinned as you have done. Lay every secret bare and let the Light of God explore every hidden corner. The surgeon who means to cure must first expose the wound and probe it to the bottom—and before we can be forgiven, we must make a clean breast of our guilt, calling a spade a spade, and not trying to excuse ourselves, or cover up the evil.

Then resolve in your soul that you will quit these sins. No half measures will do—chronic diseases require thorough cures. You remember when Augustine, after a life of sin, heard what seemed to him a voice bidding him, "Take, read," he went to his New Testament and his eye lighted on the passage, "Put you on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Then and there he determined to leave all his former lusts and, in the strength of Christ, to live a new life. It was the hour of his conversion—the axe was laid to the root of

the tree and the old profligate life was utterly renounced! The sinner became a saint who led others in the way of holiness! And when he died, he left behind him a rich legacy of experience and instruction for the people of God. Whatever the sin is, it must go—

***“Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve,
By doing so no more.”***

Then there must be much prayer, for so it was with these people. Cry mightily unto God, “Lord, save me!” Cry again and again unto Him and make this to be your one cry, “Give me Christ, or else I die!” Nothing so prepares the heart for God as crying out after Him! The water brooks are sweeter to the hart that has panted after them. The blessing is twice valued that has been won by intercession. I have heard it said that a man who wins his wife too easily treats her too lightly. Whether it is true, I cannot say, but I am sure that the richest blessings of God come to those who urge their suit again and again and who will not be denied the Grace they seek. May the Holy Spirit give you this preparation of heart by a full confession, a strong resolve and mighty prayer!

Remember, too, that there must be trust, or else the heart is not rightly prepared. We must get beyond the stage of “lamenting” and begin the act of “consenting.” Not only wish and pray for the blessing, but rely on the Lord to send it! He who smote the first-born of the Egyptians and, with a strong hand and mighty arm, brought their fathers out of the house of bondage centuries earlier, could easily deliver them! He who gave them at first the land for a possession could still scatter their enemies. Why should they not expect Him to work a work in their day? By the memory of what God did for your forefathers, I exhort you to trust in my Savior. “We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work You did in their days, in the times of old.” Therefore, O great Jehovah, will we trust in You in this *our* day!

Then, break away from the world. These people of Israel went home and smashed their idols. And then they gathered at Mizpeh, once more a separated people. It was like a declaration of war! Declare war at once with evil of every shape. Now, come, and enlist beneath the blood-stained banner of the Cross and say, “I am a follower of the Lamb, and I will not parley with iniquity. Let the Philistines come, if they will—I will not submit to them again. I will break loose from the world, God helping me.”

Perhaps you say this is not the preparation of the heart, but the beginning of the battle. I know it, but any old soldier who has been in the wars will tell you that the best preparation for the strife is the first encounter with the enemy! After the first shot or two, the coward heart becomes brave, and the trembling nerves are strung for action. Many a timid soul is kept from the joy of God’s salvation simply for the lack of a bold separation from the world. A little moral courage is all that is lacking in the case of some of you. Come out boldly and declare your desire and decision. Difficulties will vanish in the act. The first confession of Christ is the best possible preparation for the next one.

This matter of heart-preparation is most important. It is God's work and yet, as His Spirit is ever present to help our infirmities, it is also ours. You remember how Solomon, in the Proverbs, says to his son, "Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life"? If the heart is divided, the life can never be true. You will notice how Samuel put before the people the necessity of being thorough in their decision—"Return unto the Lord with all your hearts," was his clarion call. If we expect God to be wholly for us, we must be wholly for Him, and keep back nothing from His control. The Thessalonians "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God," and in like manner this preparation of heart, on the part of Israel, came between the two acts of turning from idols and serving God—and was the spring of both.

Then the next step is *the service of God*—"Serve Him only," said Samuel. "Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only." It is not enough to give up serving evil—you must come and serve the Lord! That is to say, from this time forth your great aim must be to glorify God. If you would be saved, you must give up every object in life as a guiding star to you except serving God! Whatever He bids you do, you are to do. His will must be your law. Christ will save you, but He will have you take upon you His yoke and wear it. And as He is meek and lowly in heart, He would have you learn to be so, too. And then you shall find rest unto your soul. This is Christ's way—that where He comes to save, He comes to sanctify and make us obey His will and live to His praise. His smile is reward enough for the poor service we can render Him. His, "Well done," at last will be Heaven to the heart that loves Him! Oh, that many here would say, "Yes, I wish to serve the Lord and serve the Lord only. Too long have I drawn near to Him with my lips, while my heart was far from Him. 'O Lord our God, other lords beside You have had dominion over us: but by You, only, will we make mention of Your name.'"

III. Now, I think that I hear one say, "But these three steps are pretty stiff ones—give up the idols, prepare the heart, serve only the Lord." Yes, they are, and I do not believe that these people could ever have taken these three steps if it had not been for my third point, namely, that **THEY WERE HELPED TO DO ALL THIS BY HAVING FAITH.** It was faith in Samuel, as we have already noticed. You can be much more helped, yes, graciously enabled, if you have faith in Christ!

They believed *Samuel's words*. He had spoken to them and they said to one another, "Samuel says that God will deliver us from the Philistines if we trust Him. Samuel speaks the truth." Well, now, God has sent a greater than Samuel—His Only-Begotten Son—and He says to you that, "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." You need have no doubt about it—the Word He has spoken shall never be broken! He means what He promises and not one jot or tittle of His Word shall pass away till all is fulfilled. Believe what Christ says, that there is salvation for everyone who puts his trust in Him! Believe that and take hope and, getting that hope, be bold to strike the decisive blow tonight and give up your idols and turn to God!

These people believed chiefly in *Samuel's prayers*. He was a mighty man in prayer and when the Philistines came, the children of Israel cried to him, saying, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us." How much greater faith should we put in the Lord Jesus, who died and rose again and *always* lives to plead for us! "Therefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them." Sinners, Christ is praying for you! If you trust Him, His prayers will help you to break the fetters of sin—

***"The Lion of Judah shall break every chain,
And give us the victory again and again."***

The people had faith in *Samuel's sacrifice*, for Samuel took a lamb and burnt it whole upon the altar. And our glorious Christ has made Himself the Lamb of God and He has been wholly consumed as an offering unto God. Trust in His Word! Trust in His prayers! Trust in His Sacrifice! Believe that the precious blood can make you white! Believe that there is virtue enough in the death of Christ to make atonement for all the sin that is confessed and laid before Him! If you believe, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son *has* cleansed you! If you will trust Him, your sin is put away. This is the very errand on which He came, "To put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

Hear what the Lord has said by the Prophet—"I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you." Believe this and, believing it, you shall be helped to break the idols, helped to prepare the heart, helped to come and serve the Lord only! Let the prayer go up from your heart to Him who poured out His soul on Calvary, but who is now alive and attentive to the voice of our cry, "O Lord, I trust in Your Sacrifice, I rely on Your blood! Save me for Your name's sake, and cleanse me from my sin."—

***"Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole,
I want You forever to live in my soul.
Break down every idol, cast out every foe—
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow."***

Israel also accepted *Samuel's rule*—"Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh and judged Israel in all those places." You see, salvation means being delivered from the power of sin. Salvation means being made a new man—an honest man, a holy man, a gracious man. It means that Christ, who saves the soul, begins to govern the life and this salvation is to be gained through faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord help you to believe in God Incarnate, in God making sacrifice for sin, in Jesus dead, buried, risen, ascended, sitting at the right hand of God and soon to come in Glory! Let Him enter your life and, dwelling in your heart, judge your every action and rule over your entire life.

I trust that none of you will say, "We will keep our idols." Ah, if you do so, you will not keep them long! If your idols are not taken away from you, you will be taken away from your idols. What will some of you do in the next world when there is no gold to hoard and no revelry in which to in-

dulge? When you will have no occupation but to gnash your teeth upon yourself because you committed everlasting suicide and refused and rejected Christ for a few days' pleasure, or a few years' gain? Will any of you be mad enough to let eternity go, let Heaven go and let God go for the paltry lusts of the flesh, for the fleeting gains of the hour? As I shall confront you at the bar of God, I charge you, seek Him! Put away your idols! Prepare your hearts! Trust in Jesus and serve only the Lord! God grant that it may be so, for His name's sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Samuel 7.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—331, 572, 582.**

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

In order to keep readers of the sermons informed as to MR. SPURGEON'S actual condition, it would be necessary to write reports daily instead of weekly. And even then it would be very difficult to convey anything like a true account of the changes through which he is constantly passing. During the early part of last week, the dear sufferer was very feeble and ill, but before the week closed, he appeared to be considerably better. Then, on Monday, he was not nearly so well, while on Tuesday, when this note was written, he had again improved a little. It is clear, therefore, that he needs the prayers of the Lord's people as much as ever—and he will be very grateful for them.

While the preacher is laid aside, friends can help him to address a larger audience by increasing the circulation of the sermons and *The Sword and the Trowel*. [<http://www.pilgrimpublications.com/swtrowel.htm> .]The current sermon is one that is likely to be very useful *to the undecided*. Will those who love the Lord see that all such who are known to them are furnished with a copy? And will they also pray to the Lord to bless the reading of it to them?

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

SAMUEL AND THE YOUNG MAN SAUL

NO. 1547

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

***“And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on), but stand still awhile, that I may announce to you the Word of God.”
1 Samuel 9:27.***

THIS was Samuel's third interview with this goodly young man. He had spoken with him and entertained him in his parlor, giving him the place of honor. He had afterwards spent the evening with him in quiet on the housetop and now, that they were about to part, he took a fresh opportunity of speaking to him. This time he spoke to him with great closeness of personal application, sending Saul's servant away that he might say things to Saul which nobody else might hear. He tried to speak to the young man's inmost soul. The Prophet felt a deep solemnity—his whole heart saying every word that fell from his lips. He knew that this young man was about to be made a king, to take upon him very heavy responsibilities and he might either be a great curse to Israel or a great blessing and, therefore, the man of God, with all the gravity of his years and all the earnestness of his loving spirit, said, “Stand still awhile, that I may announce to you the Word of God.”

I think I hear his earnest tones and accents sweetened by a great love, for Samuel loved Saul and it was his affection which made him speak so earnestly and pointedly. I may have among my hearers at this moment some to whom I have spoken many times, but I should like once more to have a special, personal interview with them. Come, young man, step aside and let me speak with you. Try and think that no one is here except the preacher and yourself and that he speaks to you when he speaks. I long this time to do my Master's work thoroughly with you in the power of the Spirit of God. This time the preacher would hold you fast, as if he said to each one, “I will not let you go unless you give your heart to Christ and become His servant from this very hour.”

There are two things in the text about which I wish to speak. Here is the first—the attention which Samuel requested and the second, on which we shall dwell at greater length, concerns the subject upon which he spoke.

I. First, let us think upon THE ATTENTION WHICH SAMUEL REQUESTED. He said to the servant, "Pass on before us," and he passed on. Will you, also, kindly try to dismiss from your minds any other thoughts besides those which we will try to bring before you? Bid the servant pass on. Forget, for a while, your business. Forget your family. Forget your joys, forget your sorrows. You have had enough of these, I dare say, all week. Perhaps you have been haunted by them in your sleep. Maybe your dreams have been rendered unhappy by the rehearsal of your trials. By an effort of your mind, in which God will help you, try to make these servants pass on.

I wish I could so speak that men would say of my preaching what they said of Whitefield's. One man said, "Whenever I went to Church before, I calculated how many looms the church would hold"—for he was a weaver—"but when I heard Whitefield I never thought of a loom." Another said, "While I have been in Church I have often built a ship from stem to stern. But when I heard Mr. Whitefield I could not lay a plank! He took my mind right away from such things and occupied me with higher thoughts." I pray you, help me in my endeavor to engross your attention. Let the ships go and the looms go and the kitchens go and the businesses go—send the servants away and be alone, now, with yourself and your God.

The next point in the attention requested was the desire that Saul would "stand still a while." They had been walking quietly down the hill till they had gone past the last house in the town. And when they had come fairly into the fields, Samuel said, "Stand still awhile"—as much as to say, "I have something important to say and you will hear it better if you are quiet and motionless as to your body, but especially if your mind can be still. Forget the asses that you sought after and your father's house and all home concerns and calmly listen to me." It is a very desirable thing when we are listening to the Gospel, to let it have its full effect upon us, to give our minds up to it and say—"Let it come like the dew and soak into my mind as the dew into Gideon's fleece. Let it come like a shower and let it enter into my very nature as the rain into the clods which are softened by the gentle influence of the showers."

I pray you bask in the Gospel as men do in the sunlight when they would be warm. Let the Gospel have its own legitimate effect upon you. Lay bare your bosom to it. Ask that your soul may have no stone of carelessness laid upon it, as though it were a dead thing in a sepulcher, but that it may come forth in resurrection life through the quickening Word of the Divine Spirit. Is not this what the Word of God deserves? Should it not have our living, loving attention? When God speaks, let all be silent! Hush, you senators, if God speaks! Sit still, you princes, if the King of

kings lifts up His voice! Quiet, even you celestial choirs, if Jehovah speaks! An obedient homage should be paid to the voice of God by the deep awe and reverence of the spirit.

Do you ever get alone and sit still and say, as Samuel did, in the dead of night, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears”? If you never do that, the little child Samuel may well rebuke you. He was willing that God should speak to him. But, oh, we are so busy! So busy! So sadly busy! I have heard that the great clock at St. Paul’s can scarcely be heard in Cheapside because of the traffic that is going by—and so the most solemn voices are drowned amidst the din and uproar of our business and we do not often hear God’s voice unless we are accustomed to give ourselves a little quiet and holy stillness and sit in our chamber alone and say, “Now, Lord, commune with me. I wish to hear Your voice. I open my Bible. I am about to read a few verses. Oh, speak with me.”

I do not believe there would be very many persons left unconverted if it were their habit and practice, day by day, to open the Word of God with the desire that God should speak to them. Come then, dear Friends, send your servants away! Forget your business and stand still that I may announce to you the Word of God! As the Word of God deserves such quiet attention, it certainly is only by such attention that it is likely to bless us. Faith comes by *hearing*, but not by such hearing as some men give, for the Word goes in one ear and out the other. They hear the Gospel as though it were an idle tale, or a merry song to which they listen at a street corner and then go their way. No, if you would get the blessing, you must hear as for eternity, with your ears and with your whole heart, praying while you hear, “Lord, bless this to me! Lord, bless this to me!”

I remember a child who used to be noted for great attention during sermons and his mother, noticing his deep earnestness, asked him why. He said, “Because, Mother, I heard the preacher once say that if there was a piece of the sermon that was likely to be of good to our souls, Satan would try to make us lose it. And as I do not know which part God will bless me by, I try to hear it all and to remember it all.” Oh, when people come to listen to the preacher with such a spirit as that, it is sweet work to preach! You can easily feed hungry horses and you can easily feed souls that hunger and thirst after righteousness—“They shall be filled.” The Lord help us to give earnest heed to His own saving Word! “Stand still awhile, that I may announce to you the Word of God.”

But many things arise to prevent this attention. You cannot get some folks to sit still—they are so frivolous you cannot make them think. Some men dread the process of thinking almost as much as they would a touch of the “cat” on their backs. They cannot bear to consider and meditate. God has distinguished them above brutes by giving them the faculty of

thought, but this high privilege they try to ignore! Any silly tale, or idle song, or light amusement, or pastime will entice them, but they have no soul for serious things. They go through life, not as the bee, which sucks honey from every flower, but as the butterfly which regards the garden as only a place over which it may flit and where it may occasionally alight, but gather nothing and so begins and ends its gaudy day and has nothing in store. Let us not be the fluttering insects of an idle day. God grant we may not follow the fashion of this foolish world. May frivolity and levity be taken away from us and may we, in sober earnestness, attend to things eternal.

Others, on the other hand, are so exceedingly careful about the things of this world that you cannot get them to *think* of the Word of God. What is Heaven to them? They know a plan for making a large profit. You shall talk to them of Christ and all His beauties, but they will not afford you a thought. But jingle a half-sovereign near them and you shall excite all their desires! Inform them how they could be rich and famous and they will pay you for the prescription. But tell them about Christ and you must beg and pray them to read half a page of Scripture. And as to listening to your sermon—the thing is dry—they turn away from it! O you money-grubbers, have you souls at all, or are you nothing else but bodies? Are you mere leather purses for holding money?

Do you expect to live in the future—to live in eternity—or do you think that you shall die like the dog that follows at your heel? O my Hearer, if you are not immortal, I can well excuse you that you think not of immortality! But if, indeed, you are a man made in the image of God and destined to live forever, it is but the most common common sense that you should begin to prepare for those eternal abodes in which you are to dwell world without end! Stand still awhile and let nothing come in to break the silence of your spirit while you listen to the voice of God! I would earnestly persuade everyone here who is not saved to get an hour alone somehow. Make up your mind to do so! Shut yourself up and give an hour to solemn, earnest thought and consideration of your condition before God. I am persuaded that scarcely one would do that solemnly and earnestly but what it would end well and we should have, by-and-by, to bless God for the happy result of that hour.

II. We now leave the point of the attention to be given, to consider THE SUBJECT UPON WHICH SAMUEL DISCOURSED with Saul, or rather the subject about which I would discourse at this time, if I am so happy as to have secured your ears. He says, “Stand still awhile, that I may announce to you the Word of God.” The subject is the Word of God! That God should give us a Word at all is very gracious. It is wonderful that He should condescend to speak to us because we cannot understand much—we are like

little children at the very best. For our heavenly Father to bring down the great meanings of His vast mind into human language is something very wonderful!

When He spoke on Sinai with the accompaniment of tempest and lightning, it was a gracious thing for God to speak to man—but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son Jesus Christ who is the Word—Jesus has come down into this world on purpose to interpret God to man! A man's mind goes to another man's mind by a word—the word tells what was in the speaker's thought. So Christ comes from God to us. God says to us, "You wish Me to speak—that is My speech—My SON. Read My love to you in the fact that I gave My Son! Read My justice, for I made Him bleed! Read My Mercy, for in Him I pass by transgression, iniquity and sin."

Does God speak in such golden language? Does He really speak by His own Son, the Eternal Word? And need I ask that He should have a hearing? Shall it have come to this, that God shall give up the darling of His bosom to a cruel death and yet we will turn aside and will not regard it? The Lord grant us deliverance from such madness and wickedness and help us to feel if salvation is worthy of the *death* of the Son of God, it must be worthy of our attention! If Jesus thought it worth His while to bleed upon the Cross for man's salvation, it is worth my while to put everything aside till I am saved! It is worth my while to get to my chambers and shut the door and feel as if I never would rise from my knees till I had found peace with God through Jesus Christ! God is engaged in man's salvation, even the Father! Jesus was engaged in it, even the blessed Son! And the Holy Spirit is engaged in it, even the Divine Convincer of sin! Surely that which occupies the Infinite mind of the three blessed Persons of the Divine Unity, must surely call to every wise man to lend his ears and give it all his thoughts that he may receive, obtain, possess, enjoy and delight himself in the precious things which God gives us freely in Christ Jesus!

Then, dear Hearer, be thoughtful and, "Stand still awhile, that I may announce to you the Word of God." In the particular Word of God which Samuel spoke to Saul there was some likeness to the message which I am bound to deliver to you. For, first, Samuel spoke to Saul about a kingdom of which this young man should be the king. He never dreamed of that before. He had thought of his father's donkeys, but a throne and a crown had never entered his mind. Do you know, O strange young man, you who have stolen into this service, that there is such a thing as the Kingdom of God? Jesus said, "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

Do you know, young man, that you may be a king? Yes, if you give good heed to the Gospel, you shall be a king and sing with us unto the Lord Je-

sus, for He has made us kings and priests unto God and we shall reign with Him. Are you occupied entirely with your business, with seeking after a degree at the University, with striving to pass an examination or gain employment? I will not call you away from such pursuits, yet there is something higher than these. You may not be contented with such things as these, for God calls you, He calls you to a higher destiny, to something noble, so noble that those who share in it rank higher than the kings of the earth!

Little did Saul dream that on this day the kingdom would be given to him and little do you dream of it, perhaps, as yet. But I pray you, let me announce to you the Word of God, for you may yet find a kingdom there, a kingdom for you, a crown of life for you which fades not and a seat at the right hand of God with Christ in the day of His appearing! Samuel not only spoke about the kingdom, but he announced to Saul the Word of God by an anointing. He took out a flask which contained a little oil and he poured it on his head. "O my Hearer, stand still awhile" and I will tell you of an anointing! If you regard this present voice of God and do heartily incline your ears and come unto Christ that you may live, you shall, by so doing, receive an anointing from the Holy One by which you shall know all things that concern your soul and your God!

You say, "I know little about religion." You shall be taught of God, for this is the promise—"All your children shall be taught of the Lord and great shall be the peace of your children." You say, "I am not capable of high and noble things." You shall be *made* capable, for in the day when God anoints you, you shall receive strength—"To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." You shall receive enlightenment and illumination by the Divine unction of the Holy Spirit! Have you ever thought of this? There is not only water to wash you, but oil to anoint you! Christ can take away your sin at this moment and He can also give you Grace so that you shall leave off the habits which up to now have bound you down! You can become a new creature in Christ Jesus! Is not such a gracious visitation worth standing still to receive?

Samuel spoke to Saul about another matter, namely, about a change that he would undergo. For as he talked with him, he said, "You shall meet a company of Prophets and you shall prophesy and become another man." Little can you tell, my dear Friend, what God will do with you. If you are willing and obedient you shall eat the good of the land. If the Spirit of God shall lead you in penitence to confess your sin and in humble, childlike faith to lay hold on Christ, you shall become, in a higher sense than Saul ever was, "another man!" You shall be born again! You shall be a new creature in Christ Jesus! Listen to these words of the blessed Covenant, for I would hold you and announce to you the Word of

God. "I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and will give them an heart of flesh." "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me."

"I could never be a Christian," says one. No, not as you are, but you shall be made a new man and the new man is made in the image of Christ and is a Christian! Have you ever heard of this? This being changed? This being totally changed? Have you ever heard that God can create you for the second time? That He can destroy in you the power of sin and bring you under another dominion and make you as eager after right as you have been after wrong and make you as happy in the service of Christ as ever you were in the service of the devil, yes and 10,000 times more so? And oh, I would not wonder, though you think it cannot be, He will open your mouth to talk to others about Christ!

Though, young man, you little dream of such a thing at this moment, it may be the Lord has sent me to call you to Himself that you may surrender yourself to Jesus and then, in some future day, you shall—

***"Stand and announce to sinners round
What a dear Savior you have found,"***

and be as enthusiastic in the service of the Lord Jesus as ever you have been in the frivolities of the world! Does something in your heart say, "I wish that it would so happen to me"? Is there a secret something in your heart echoing to that which I am saying? Oh Lord, grant that it may be so! This is what we want you to think about, then, the Kingdom, the anointing and the change that God can work in you. If you will come and think well of the Word of God, you will see in it that which will meet all the past of your life, whatever it has been. There may be blots upon it, but in the Word of God you will find that which will wash them all away.

You may have wept over your life and yet cannot wash away its stains—but the Word of God will tell you how you shall be made whiter than snow and made to start again in life, delivered from every crimson stain! As to the present, does it puzzle you? Ah, well it may, for life is a tangled skein to those who know not God. But you shall find the clue of it, you shall thread the labyrinth, you shall see how even your afflictions work for your good, how your sickness means your health, how your being out of work and in poverty is to make you rich, how even your lying at death's door is sent to give you life and you shall so understand the present as to feel that with all its apparent evil it is working for your good!

And as to the future, would you read aright your destiny? My Lord can tell you the future by making you know that, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life and you shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Oh that men would not neglect the Word of God, either in the hearing of it preached, or in the private reading of it in their homes!

For believe me, there is something in the Bible which suits just you. Poor fallen woman, have you strolled in here tonight? There is something for you in the Holy Scriptures! Poor despairing man, far gone in desperation, there is something in the Book on purpose for you! I used to think that a certain text in the Bible was written with a special view to my case. It seemed to me that it might have been penned after I had lived, so accurately did it describe me.

Even so, dear Friend, there is something in the Bible for you! Just as when you have lost a key and you cannot open a drawer you send for a locksmith, God turns over no end of skeleton keys till, at last, He has got the right one and He moves the bolt for you! So is it with the Scriptures—there is a key for every lock, there is a clue for every difficulty—a help for every trouble and a comfort for every grief. Only stand still awhile and let us announce to you the Word of God! Some Christian Brother may find the key for you, or you may stumble on it while searching the Word for yourself. Or the Holy Spirit may bring it to you. There is a word to suit *your* case—therefore give the Book a fair opportunity and stand still and hear the Word of God.

Let me say to you, you may not know the Word of God, but the Word knows you! You know not the Scriptures, but the Scriptures know you as you will never know yourself, for the Word of God is quick and powerful and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Many and many a time have persons written to me, or spoken with me and said, “Did you intend, in the sermon, to make a personal allusion to me?” I have said, “Yes, I did. Most certainly I did! But I never saw you in my life and never knew anything about your case, only He that sent me bade me say this and that and He knew who would be there to hear it and He took care to guide His servant’s thoughts and words so as to suit your case to the letter so that there could be no mistake about it.” The letter came to the man’s house, as it were, with precise directions and there was no question that God had sent it to his soul. Now, therefore, my Hearer, go to the Word of God and it will speak home to you, if you go with the desire to be personally dealt with.

Dear Friends, he who speaks to you at this time can honestly say that he is speaking out the burden of his heart. I came not here to speak with you, young man, without first earnestly asking to be directed in each word I say. And what motive can I have in all the world in urging you to seek the Savior’s love but your good? Will it concern me, do you think, at the Last Day, whether you are saved or not? If I set Christ before you faithfully, I shall be clear of your blood—fully clear even if you reject my Lord. But I would put my hand on you, as I do not doubt Samuel did on Saul, and plead with you for your own sake, for the sake of all the future that

lies before you, for the sake, perhaps, of some in Heaven whose last words were, "Follow me"—for the sake of a mother who prays for you and is praying while you are sitting in this House of Prayer.

Above all, I plead with you for His sake who loves to save and delights to bless. Oh, by the wounded hands we sung of just now and by the broken heart and by the intense affection of the ever-loving Intercessor for sinners, stand still awhile and seek to know the Word of God! It may be that at this moment you are put into a position in which you will have to make a choice—a choice for eternity—for Heaven or for Hell. God save you from making a fatal choice! There is an engagement for tomorrow which, if you follow it, will be your ruin. Do not fulfill it! May God's Spirit lead you to say at once, "I am on God's side! I must be and I will be. It is done, it is done! If He will have me, He shall have me! If He will wash me, I am ready to be washed! If He will renew me, I am pleading to be renewed! If He will but take me in hand and bring me to Himself, here I am, here I am! My Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before You and am no more worthy to be called Your son. But receive me! Take me back again."

Ah, you backslider over there, I pray that you may be led to decide for the kingdom and the anointing and undergo a change at this very hour! Let this be the time, the set time of mercy for your soul! I should not wonder but that for many years to come, if we are spared, you and I, my Friend, who have never spoken together before, may have to rejoice over this present meeting! Samuel was very pleased with Saul for a long time, though, unhappily, Saul disappointed all his hopes. But I hope I have met with someone anointed of the Lord, whom He intends to bless at this good hour, to whom He will say, "From this day will I bless you. Young heart, you have yielded yourself to Me and from this day I will comfort you, bless you, cheer you, sanctify you, instruct you, cause you to grow and become strong and I will use you in My service and you shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels."

Oh that the clock of destiny would strike tonight and you would hear it and solemnly declare—

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

God grant it for Christ's sake! Amen.

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LOOKING FOR ONE THING AND FINDING ANOTHER NO. 3075

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

*“And the donkeys of Kish, Saul’s father, were lost. And Kish said to Saul, his son, Take now one of the servants with you, and arise, go seek the donkeys...And as for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, set not your mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on you, and on all your father’s house?”
1 Samuel 9:3, 20.*

SAUL went out to seek his father’s donkeys. He failed in the search, but he found a crown. He met with the Prophet Samuel, who anointed him king over God’s people, Israel, and this was far better than finding the obstinate colts. Let us consider this amazing incident. Perhaps, though it treats of donkeys, it may yield us some royal thoughts.

I. Our first remark shall be—OBSERVE HOW THE HAND OF GOD’S PROVIDENCE CAUSES LITTLE THINGS TO LEAD ON TO GREAT MATTERS.

This man Saul must be placed in the way of the Prophet Samuel. How shall a meeting be brought about? Poor beasts of burden shall be the intermediate means! The donkeys go astray and Saul’s father bids him take a servant and go seek them. In the course of their wanderings, the animals might have gone North, South, East or West—for who shall account for the wild will of runaway donkeys? But so it happened, as men say, that they strayed, or were thought to have strayed, in such a direction that, by-and-by, Saul found himself near to Ramah, where Samuel, the Prophet, was ready to anoint him. On how small an incident the greatest results may hinge! The pivots of history are microscopic.

Hence, it is most important for us to learn that the smallest trifles are as much arranged by the God of Providence as the most startling events. He who counts the stars has also numbered the hairs of our heads. Our lives and deaths are predestined, but so, also, are our sitting down and our rising up. Had we but sufficiently powerful perceptive faculties, we would see God’s hand as clearly in each stone of our pathway as in the revolution of the earth. In watching our own lives, we may plainly see that on many occasions the merest grain has turned the scale. Whereas there seemed to be but a hair’s-breadth between one course of action and another, yet that hair’s-breadth has sufficed to direct the current of our life! “He,” says Flavel, “who will observe Providences shall never be long without a Providence to observe.” Providence may be seen as the finger of God, not merely in those events which shake nations and are duly emblazoned on the pages of history, but in little incidents of common

life—yes, in the motion of a grain of dust, the trembling of a dewdrop, the flight of a swallow or the leaping of a fish!

II. But that is not the consideration to which we now invite you. Our drift is this—as Saul went out to find donkeys, but found a crown, so, **IN THE MATTER OF GRACE, MANY A MAN HAS RECEIVED WHAT HE LOOKED NOT FOR.**

That is a remarkable text in Isaiah—“I am found of them that sought Me not.” *Sometimes the Sovereign Grace of God is pleased to light on persons who had no thought about it*—who were, to all appearance, quite unprepared for it—no, even opposed to its Divine operations. These persons have stumbled on the treasures hid in the field when they were only thinking of their plow. They have met Jesus at the well when they only purposed to fill their water pots. They have heard glad tidings of the Savior when they were only caring for their flocks.

On ground not furrowed the rain of Heaven has fallen. Grace has come unasked. We have emblems of this in the Scriptures, in the miracles which were worked by our Lord and His Apostles. There was a young man dead, carried out to be buried, and around his bier were his weeping mother and relatives. Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, was entering in at the gate of the city, but we do not read that any of the mourners sought a miracle at His hands. They had not the faith to expect that He would raise the dead. The young man, being dead, was far beyond the possibility of seeking help for himself from the miracle-working hand of Jesus. But Jesus interposed and commanded the bearers to stand still—they did so and then, unsought and unasked, Jesus said, “Young man, I say unto you, Arise,” and he arose to be delivered to his mother! Many a young man has been in like plight—he has been dead in trespasses and sins, but Christ’s interposition has not been sought by him. He has not trembled at his low position. He has not even understood it, being utterly dead and, therefore, insensible of his ruined state! The Redeemer has sovereignly interposed. The Holy Spirit has poured light into the darkened conscience. The man has received Grace and has lived a new and spiritual life—a life for which he had never sought!

Of a like character was the miracle of casting out devils from the two demoniacs among the Gergesenes, in which case the unhappy men were moved by the evil spirits to entreat the Savior to leave them alone. Such, also, were the miracles of restoring the man with the withered hand, the feeding of the multitudes and the healing of the ear of Malchus. Here, swift-footed mercy outran the cry of misery!

Take another case from Apostolic times. A poor beggar, extremely lame, hobbled one morning up to the Beautiful Gate of the Temple and there took his daily place and began his incessant cry for a little charitable aid for a poor paralyzed man. Peter and John came up to the Temple to pray. Doubtless he looked upon them, but it never entered into his heart to ask them to heal him. He asked for alms. Drop a few Roman pennies into his palm and he would be content with the gift. But Peter and John gave to him what he had not sought for. They bade him, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk—and up he leaped, delivered from his infirmity, without having expected such a deliverance!

These emblems can be interpreted by kindred facts of Divine Grace. Christ has often met with individuals and saved them when they have not been seeking Him. Matthew was not seeking Jesus when the Lord bade him leave the table at which he was receiving custom and follow Him. The case of Zacchaeus was similar—he came in the way of Christ’s preaching, but his motive was purely one of curiosity, “he sought to see Jesus, who He was.” He was curious to know what kind of a Man this was who had set all Judaea on a stir. Who was this that made Herod tremble, was reputed to have raised the dead and was known to have healed all manner of diseases? Zacchaeus, the rich publican, is a lover of sights—and he must see Jesus! But there is a difficulty—he is too short—he cannot look over the heads of the crowd! Yonder is a sycamore tree and he will, for once, imitate the boys and climb! Mark how carefully he conceals himself among the thick branches, for he would not have his rich neighbors discover him in such a position. But Christ’s eyes detected the little man and, standing beneath that tree—unmasked, unsought, unexpected—Jesus said, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for today I must abide at your house.” And soon these gracious words were spoken by Christ, also, “This day is salvation come to this house.”

Deeds of Grace have been worked in this Tabernacle after the same fashion. Men and women have come here out of curiosity—a curiosity created by some unfounded story or malicious slander of prejudiced minds. And yet Jesus Christ has called them and they have become both *His* disciples and *our* warm-hearted friends! Some of the most unlikely recruits have been our most valuable soldiers. They began with aversion and ended with enthusiasm. They came to scoff, but remained to pray! These seats could tell many an incident of the “romance of Grace” more wonderful than the marvels of fiction!

No, Brothers and Sisters, such is the surprising Grace of God, that He has not only been pleased to save men who did not expect it, but *He has even condescended to interpose for the salvation of men who were fighting against His Grace and violently opposing His cause.* Read yon story which will never lose its charm, of which the hero is one Saul of Tarsus! What a singular subject for converting Grace! He had resolved to hound the saints to death. He would exterminate them if he could. His blood boiled against the followers of Jesus—he could not speak of them calmly—he was mad with rage. Hear him rave at them! “What? Will these men oppose the traditions of the fathers and of the Pharisees? If they are allowed to multiply, there will be no respect paid to our holy men or their weighty sentences!” He will persecute them out of existence, not only in Jerusalem, but in Damascus! Yet, in a few days, this hater of the Gospel was touched by the Gospel’s power—and never did Christendom gain a braver champion! Nothing could dampen his fervor or quench his zeal! Persecuted, beaten with rods, shipwrecked thrice—nothing could stop him from serving his Lord! What a complete reversing of the engine and yet it was gaining at express speed! When he was most at enmity against Christ, then was his turning point! As though some strong hand had suddenly seized by the bridle a horse that had broken loose and was

about to leap down a precipice, and had thrown it back on its haunches and delivered it at the last moment from the destruction on which it was impetuously rushing, so Christ interposed and saved the rebel of Tarsus from being his own destroyer!

Another case arrives before us most vividly. It is that of the jailor at Philippi. He did not look like seeking the Savior and being converted. He received Paul and Silas and made their feet fast in the stocks—a piece of superfluous brutality. They could not have escaped from the inner prison and it was needless to lay them by the heels. No doubt he wished to please his masters and felt a contempt for the Apostles. The jailors in those days had usually been soldiers—and camp life among the Romans was indeed rough—his nature evidently furnished very flinty soil for the Gospel to grow in. But an earthquake comes. The prison quakes. It is a mysterious earthquake, for the prison doors are lifted from their hinges and the prisoners' fetters are unbound! The jailor trembles and, to make short work of the story, he believes in Jesus! He is baptized with all his believing household. He invites the Apostles to his table, entertains them and becomes one of the first members of the Church of God at Philippi! What cannot the Gospel do when it comes in its power? And where may it not come? May it not, at this moment, visit another prison and save another jailor, though his thoughts are far otherwise? We have ourselves met with similar cases. Many old stories are current which we do not doubt are true. There is one of a man who never would attend a place of worship until he was induced to go to hear the singing. He would listen to the tunes, he said, but he would have “none of your canting preaching.” He would put his fingers in his ears. He takes that wicked precaution and effectually blocks up Ear-Gate for a while. But the gate is stormed by a little adversary, for a fly settles on his nose—he must brush it off and, as he takes out his finger to do so, the preacher says, “He that has ears to hear, let him hear.” The man listens! The Word of God pierces his soul and he is converted!

I remember quite well, and the subject of the story is most probably present in this congregation, that a very singular conversion was worked at New Park Street Chapel. A man who had been accustomed to go to a gin palace to fetch in gin for his Sunday evening's drinking, saw a crowd round the door of the chapel. He looked in and forced his way to the top of the gallery stairs. Just then, I looked in the direction in which he stood—I do not know why I did so, but I remarked that there might be a man in the gallery who had come in there with no very good motive, for even then he had a gin-bottle in his pocket. The singularity of the expression struck the man and being startled because the preacher so exactly described him, he listened attentively to the warnings which followed. The Word reached his heart—the Grace of God met with him—he became converted and today he is walking humbly in the fear of God!

These cases are not at all uncommon. They were not unusual in the days of Whitefield and Wesley. They tell us, in their Journals, of persons who came with stones in their pockets to throw at the Methodists, but whose enmity was slain by a stone from the sling of the Son of David. Others came to create disturbances, but a disturbance was created in their hearts which could never be quelled till they came to Jesus Christ

and found peace in Him! The history of the Church of God is studded with the remarkable conversions of persons who did not wish to be converted, were not looking for Grace and were even opposed to it! And yet, by the interposing arm of Eternal Mercy, were struck down and transformed into earnest and devoted followers of the Lamb!

III. That fact being established, we may now range our thoughts around the question. WHAT SHALL WE SAY ABOUT IT?

What shall we say about these acts of Sovereign Preventing Grace? Why, first, we will say, *behold the freeness of the Grace of God*. It is like the dew that comes on the earth which stays not for man, neither waits for the sons of men. It is like the sunbeam shining into the hovel and finding its way through grimy windowpanes, more calculated to shut it out than to admit it! It is like the wind which whistles among the ropes, whether the mariners desire it or not. God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy! He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion—not because of any goodness in the sinner, or because of any preparedness in the creature—but simply because He wills it, He visits men with salvation! He is so able to work salvation that He waits not for any contributory arm, but when the creature is most dead and most corrupt—then comes in the quickening Grace of God and gets to itself all the Glory of salvation!

If every convert were brought in through the usual means of Grace, we would come to regard conversion as a necessary result from certain fixed causes—and attribute some mystic virtue to the outward means. But when God is pleased to distribute the blessing entirely apart from these, then He shows that He can do without means as well as with means—that nothing is too mighty a work for Him, that His arm is not shortened at all so that He needs to use an instrument to make up the length of it—neither has He lost any strength so as to be forced to appeal to us to make up the deficiency! If it were God's will, He could, by a word, convert a nation! If so He chose—He is such a master of human hearts that as readily as the corn waves in the breath of the summer's wind, so could He make all hearts bow before the mysterious impulses of His Holy Spirit! Why He does it not, we know not. That is among His secrets. But when He works in a marked and decided way beyond all expectation, He does but give us a proof of how He is able to work as He wills among the armies of Heaven and the inhabitants of this lower world! Oh, the richness, the freeness, the power of the Grace of God! The richness of it, that it comes to those who sought it not! The freeness of it, that it waits not for preparation on man's part! The power of it, that it makes the unwilling willing when the appointed hour has come! Brothers and Sisters, let us heartily join together in adoring this Grace of God which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life in as many as it pleases the Lord our God to call!

What shall we say further about this? We will gather this consoling inference from it—*if the Lord is thus found of those that seek Him not, how much more surely will He be found of those who seek Him!* If He has been known to give sight to those who did not ask for it, how much more will He bestow it upon those who cry, "Son of David, have mercy on us!"

If he saved Saul who hated Him, much more will He listen to him that cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner." If He called careless, curious Zacchaeus, much more will He speak to you, my anxious, earnest Hearers who are saying, "Oh that He would speak to me!" If a man opens his door and voluntarily calls to a passing beggar, and says, "Here, poor man, here is relief for you," why, then, the man who begs importunately will not be sent away unhelped—will he?

If I were in the case of the seeker, I should be mightily encouraged by the subject before us. I would say, "Does Jesus thus call those who were not hungering and thirsting and does He bring them to the Gospel feast? Then, when I, a poor hungry thirsty sinner, come wringing my hands and saying, 'Oh, that He would give me to drink of the Water of Life. Oh, that He would let me feed on the blessings of His Grace,' surely He will receive me!" Be cheered, you humble penitents, the Lord's heart is too large to permit Him to send you away empty! Be encouraged, at this moment, to breathe the silent prayer, "O God, the Lord and Giver of Grace, give Your Grace to us who seek it now!" Why, dear Heart, you already have Grace, or you would not seek it, for Grace must first come to you to make you seek Grace! Be thankful, for salvation has come to your house! Dead men do not long for life. In the marble limbs of the corpse there is no struggling after life, no pangs of desire for health. God has looked on you in love—look you to Jesus and live!

What else shall we say about this Doctrine? There is one other thing we will say about it—*from this time forward we will never despair of anybody*. If the Lord Jesus Christ called Saul of Tarsus when he was foaming at the mouth with wrath, there are none among the wicked who are beyond the reach of hopeful prayer! Your boy breaks your heart, dear Mother. You have wept over him many years. He is far away, now, and the last you heard of him wounded your soul. And Unbelief said, "Do not pray for him again." Ah! That is the devil's counsel! He is no good messenger who bids a mother cease praying for her child while that child is out of Hell! Have faith in the Divine Power and pray for your boy! Who knows what the Lord may yet make of him?

There is one living in your parish, a swearer, and everything that is bad. You did once think of asking him to come and hear the Gospel, but you said, "It is of no use—he will be sure to turn it into ridicule." How do you know? It is the very boast of Grace that it shines into the unlikeliest hearts! God's electing love has, in many cases, selected great fools *and* great sinners. At least I know that God's people think themselves such. I have said never despair of your child, and I will put it to you again—if you have friends who are infidel, or persecuting, or profane, yet, as long as you live and they live, it is your business to labor for their conversion and to weep and pray for them! O Brothers and Sisters, if the lives of some of us before conversion had been known, good men might have denied the possibility of our salvation! If all the secrets of our hearts had been written, some would have said, "This is a hopeless case." But mercy saved *us* and, therefore, it can save *anybody*! Never say of any place, "It is such a den of iniquity I can do no good there." Never say, "That workshop is so profane I could not speak of religion there." Oh, you do not know—you do not know! With God at your back, if it were possible to

save the damned in Hell, you might go and preach there and win trophies for Christ! Never think any too bad or too vile, but labor on, for God can work wonders in every case.

IV. We will close when we have noticed, with great brevity, WHAT WE OUGHT NOT TO SAY ABOUT THESE THINGS.

We have told you what we should say about these remarkable conversions—we should behold the freeness and sovereignty of the Grace of God. We should be encouraged to seek it for ourselves and we should hope for the conversion of others. But now, what ought we *not* to say? One thing we ought not to say is this—“*Then I shall sit still and perhaps the Grace of God will come to me. I shall not seek, nor pray, nor desire, for if I am quite unconcerned, Grace may yet visit me.*” Now, my dear Hearer, if you make such an excuse as that for your spiritual indolence, you will find the covering too thin to conceal your nakedness! You know better. A man suddenly stumbles upon wealth, by a windfall or a speculation. Do you therefore say, “I shall not keep my shop open. I shall leave business. I shall not go to work again, for Robinson has found a thousand pounds. I shall stay at home and perhaps I shall do the same”? No, you know that all the examples in the world of sudden wealth only go to prove the rule that he who would gain riches must find them in the appointed way. So, all the examples of these remarkable interpositions of God only go to prove the rule that he who would have mercy must seek it. “Seek you the Lord while He may be found,” is the fixed rule—and though God comes to some who seek Him not, yet the rule still holds good.

Do you not know that all the while you remain impenitent, your soul is under condemnation? Some men have run this awful risk and yet have escaped—is that any reason why you should? I have heard of a man who took poison, but so rapid was the action of a surgeon in the neighborhood that by means of a stomach pump the man’s life was preserved. Is that a reason why you, too, should swallow poison? Because Providence has preserved some while they were running on in sin, is that a reason why you should continue to rebel against God? I have heard a story of an English sailor in a foreign port when the foreigners were manning the yards and performing their maneuvers in honor of a royal personage. Our countryman, in order to show what an Englishman could do, climbed to the top of the mast and stood there on his head! On a sudden the ship lurched and he fell! But, by a happy Providence, he caught a rope as he fell and descended safely to the deck. “There,” he said, “you fellows see if you could tumble down like that.” Are you surprised that no one accepted the challenge? Who but a fool would have thought it worth his while to imitate the example? Because here and there a man who runs solemn risks is, by the interposition of Divine Grace, saved from the consequences of his folly, is that a reason why you should run those hazards yourselves? God does thus interpose, nobody can doubt it. But still, His Sovereign rule is, “Seek you the Lord while He may be found,” and His Gospel cries daily, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Trust the merits of Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, for our Gospel is not, “Sit still and wait for Divine

interpositions,” but, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.”

Moreover, we should never say, “*Why use means for saving others? God can do His own work.*” Brethren, a man is always in a vicious state of heart when he speaks so! He knows he talks nonsense and he only does so as an excuse for his indolence and to quiet his conscience. We are to labor to win souls, for men are brought to God by instrumentality! Where God has appeared to save without any means, if you could have the whole matter before you, you would find that means were used. For instance, take Saul’s conversion. You will ask, “What means were used in his case?” We do not know, but possibly the dying martyr Stephen, when he prayed for his enemies, may have been the secondary cause of the young man’s call by Divine Grace. At any rate, he was included in Stephen’s intercession—and that prayer went up to God for Saul—and was prevalent with Heaven. And then, look again—after Saul had been arrested from above, Ananias must come in to open his eyes. So that, even in that case, there was the instrumentality of prayer before and the instrumentality of instruction afterwards.

So it may be with many an one who has been suddenly converted. There was a mother, perhaps, in Heaven, who had prayed for the man 40 years before, for prayer will keep and be fragrant many a year! And let me say that if neither father nor mother ever prayed for that conversion, perhaps a grandfather did, for prayer has power for hundreds of years! And a great-grandfather’s prayers may be the instrumentality of the conversion of his great-grandchildren! There is no end to the efficacy of prayer. Good Dr. Rippon often used, in the pulpit, to pour out his soul in prayer that God would bless the Church of which he was the pastor—and the members at the Tabernacle have been the inheritors of the blessings brought down by his intercession! Pray on, then. Your prayers may not be answered for the next five centuries. Those prayers of yours may be lying by till Christ comes, but they will avail in some way!

So that you see when we think there is no instrumentality, there really is an instrumentality if we could but see it. These remarkable cases must never be used as a reason why we are not to do all that we can to bring sinners to Christ! God’s work, in such instances, instead of discouraging us, should stimulate action on our part. Because God works, are we to be still? No, but *because* God works, let us be workers together with Him that, through us, directly or indirectly, His purposes may be fulfilled. Suppose, now, it were known that the events of a certain battle would depend entirely on the skill of the general? The two armies are equally balanced and everything must depend upon the tact of the commander. Would the soldiers, therefore, conclude that they needed not to load, or fire, or draw a sword because everything depended on the commander? No, but the commander works and his soldiers work together with him. So is it with us. Everything depends on God but we are His instruments. We are His servants and because He is at our back, let us go forward with courage and zeal. The results are certain, God being our Helper. I charge you, my Brothers and Sisters, to take heart from the fact that God works great wonders! Go to your classes, or wherever else you may be laboring, singing cheerfully the song of hope and offering the prayer of

full assurance. When we feel that we must have souls saved, souls will be saved! For my part, I cannot be happy unless sinners are led to Jesus. We must have it! The Holy Spirit will not let us rest without it! We shall have it—and God shall have the praise! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 SAMUEL 9:1-25; 10:1-8.**

1 Samuel 9:1, 2. *Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. And he had a son whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and handsome: and there was not among the children of Israel a more handsome person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.* Here we have the pedigree of the great king of Israel, Saul, the son of Kish. He was descended from a noble tribe, though not a very large one, and he appears to have been endowed with a very notable personal appearance. “There was not among the children of Israel a more handsome person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.” And to the Israelites of that day, who had got away from looking up to God and to the more valuable accomplishments of the mind and the heart, the striking personal appearance of Saul would be a great attraction and recommendation.

3, 4. *And the donkeys of Kish, Saul’s father, were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with you, and arise, go seek the donkeys. And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found them not: then they passed through the land of Shalim, and there they were not: and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found them not.* He was diligent in his father’s service, even though that service meant a fruitless journey in search of some stray donkeys. As he was then faithfully discharging the duties of his station in life, he was the man who was likely to rise to some higher position. He was the son of “a mighty man of power” or substance, and yet so simple were the manners of the time that he was sent, with one of the servants, to look for the lost donkeys. And he appears to have started at once to carry out the commission which had been entrusted to him. Learn from Saul’s obedience, dear young people, to never despise any duty which falls to your lot in the ordinary avocations of daily life—you will be preparing yourselves for some higher position by doing well what you are called to do now.

5. *And when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that was with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the donkeys, and take thought for us.* There was evidently in Saul, at that time, a great considerateness of spirit. He wished to save his father from having any painful anxiety concerning his son and his servant, for Saul put both together when he said, “us.” It is most desirable that young men in the present day should have a tender regard for those to whom they owe their being, and who have done so much for them in the years of their tender infancy—and that all young people

should be careful never needlessly to give their parents one anxious thought on their account.

6. *And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God and he is an honorable man; all that he says comes surely to pass: now let us go there; perhaps he can show us our way that we should go.* In this case, as in so many others, the servant seems to have had more Divine Grace than his young master had, for the name of Samuel the Prophet was not unknown to him and he knew where the “man of God” lived. And he told Saul a good deal about him and gave him some good advice as to what they should do. In any case where the servant, but not the master, knows the Lord, it is well, when occasion offers, and it can be done prudently and discreetly, for the servant to speak up and give a good word for the cause of God and truth.

7. *Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? For the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?* He says nothing about any money that he may have had in his own pocket, and again his servant has to lead the way.

8, 9. *And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver; that will I give to the man of God to tell us our way. (Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spoke, Come, and let us go to the Seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer).* He was a man who looked further ahead than others could, for, under Divine Inspiration, he could see into the future.

10. *Then said Saul to his servant, Well said; come, let us go.* Saul was willing to be liberal at his servant’s expense, and to let him give “the fourth part of a shekel of silver” to the Prophet for him. And we have known some other folk who have been very generous in giving away the money of other people rather than their own!

10-12. *So they went unto the city where the man of God was. And as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the Seer here? And they answered them, and said, He is; behold, he is before you: make haste now, for he came today to the city; for there is a sacrifice of the people today in the high place.* These young maidens were evidently well informed—they knew where the man of God was, they knew what he was going to do and they knew the time of the sacrifice or feast. Let us hope that they not only knew all this, but that they entered into the true spirit of it.

13-19. *As soon as you come into the city, you shall straightway find him, before he goes up to the high place to eat: for the people will not eat until he comes because he does bless the sacrifice; and afterwards those who are invited will eat. Now therefore, get you up; for about this time you shall find him. And they went up into the city: and when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out toward them, to go up to the high place. Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man out of the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be captain over My people Israel, that he may save My people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon My people, because their cry is come unto Me. And when*

Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spoke to you of, this same shall reign over My people. Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray you, where the Seer's house is. And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the Seer. Saul evidently did not know Samuel, and it appears from this fact that he was not a gracious, religious man. He had the charm of a fine outward appearance and he probably had many of the domestic virtues, but he was not one who lived in the fear of God.

19-21. *Go up before me unto the high place, for you shall eat with me today, and tomorrow I will let you go, and will tell you all that is in your heart. And as for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, set not your mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on you, and on all your father's house? And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? And my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why, then, do you speak so to me? There was a very becoming modesty about him. He was really surprised and startled that such an honor should be in store for him. He had many natural virtues but, alas, the Grace of God was not upon him.*

22-24. *And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlor, and made them sit in the chief place among them that were invited, which were about thirty persons. And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave you, of which I said unto you, Set it by you. And the cook took up the shoulder, and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul. The right shoulder of the animal that was offered in sacrifice was part of the priest's portion, and this shoulder Samuel now ordered the cook to set before Saul as he sat in the place of honor!*

24, 25. *And Samuel said, Behold that which is left! Set it before you, and eat; for unto this time has it been kept for you since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day. And when they were come down from the high place into the city, Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house. For quietness and seclusion, Samuel took the young man upstairs to the flat roof of the house and they walked to and fro, in the cool of the evening, talking about the high destiny to which Saul was called, and Samuel doubtless giving him valuable instructions concerning his new and important duties.*

1 Samuel 10:1, 2. *And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send you away. And Saul arose, and they went out, both of them, he and Samuel, abroad. And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on), but stand you still a while, that I may show you the Word of God. [See Sermon #1547, Volume 26—SAMUEL AND THE YOUNG MAN SAUL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, is it not because the LORD has anointed you to be captain over His inheritance? When you are departed from me today. He gave Saul some signs by which he could confirm the truth of all that he had spoken to him—"When you are departed from me today."*

2. *Then you shall find two men by Rachel's sepulcher in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah.* It was well for Samuel to send Saul, with brilliant prospects opening before him, to the sepulcher of the mother of his tribe. Oh, that we were all wise enough to think often of our last hours! Communion with the grave might even help us to communion with Heaven. Samuel said to Saul, "You shall find two men by Rachel's sepulcher."

2, 3. *And they will say unto you, The donkeys which you went to seek are found: and lo, your father has left the care of the donkeys, and sorrow for you, saying, what shall I do for my son? Then shall you go on forward from there and you shall come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet you three men going up to God at Bethel, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine.* Going to offer to God a meat offering and a thank offering. How could Samuel have known all this if God had not anointed his eyes and made him a Seer who could see what others saw not?

4. *And they will salute you, and give you two loaves of bread; which you shall receive of their hand.* "You shall take from them your first tribute as a king. They shall give you two loaves of bread, to teach you to avoid all luxury, and not to be a king who delights in delicate and dainty fare. You shall fare as the people do."

5, 6. *After that you shall come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when you are come there to the city, that you shall meet a company of Prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp before them, and they shall prophesy: and the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you, and you shall prophesy with them.* "You shall speak with enthusiasm about God. Moved with a holy passion you shall speak like a man inspired."

6. *And shall be turned into another man.* Note that Samuel did not say to Saul, "You shall be turned into a *new* man," for that is what he never was. He become, for awhile, *another* man—a different man from what he had been before—but he never became a gracious man.

7, 8. *And let it be, when these signs are come unto you, that you do as occasion serves you; for God is with you. And you shall go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto you, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shall you tarry, till I come to you, and show you what you shall do.*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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HIDING AMONG THE STUFF

NO. 3322

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1912.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 19, 1866.**

***“Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come there. And the LORD answered, Behold, he has hid himself among the stuff. And they ran and fetched him from there.”
1 Samuel 10:22-23.***

SAUL seems to have known that he was the elect person, having already been secretly anointed by Samuel and, therefore, while the voting was going on and while the lots were being cast, he hid himself. The Lord answered, “Behold, he has hid himself among the stuff. And they ran and fetched him from there.”

We hardly know why Saul did this. It would be wrong to impute to him an ill motive, otherwise one would be inclined to say that he did it out of mock modesty, so that he might appear to have forced on him an honor which he did not really covet. But this would not fit with the first part of Saul’s life, for in his early days and when he was first chosen king, he did seem to be one of the most hopeful persons who could possibly have been called to the office. At the end of the chapter from which our text is taken, you see an instance of his great wisdom. The men of Belial, we are told, “despised him and brought him no presents. But he held his peace,” a piece of wisdom which it were well if some ministers and others, too, among us knew well how to imitate—if they, too, would sometimes be silent when the men of Belial speak concerning them. It, indeed, were well for all Christians to often imitate the example of their Lord who, when He was reviled, gave no answer but that of patient, enduring silence.

We are inclined the rather, therefore, to give Saul the credit for being really so modest that he concealed himself from honor and must have greatness forced upon him. He had been born great in stature, but now to be made great in office seemed a burden which he did not covet—and so he hid himself among the stuff.

From this, if it really is so, we may learn that *without the Grace of God the fairest life may yet become foul* and, however beautifully a young man may commence his career, he may stumble and fall and never reach the goal. Oh, how many amiable daughters, the joy of their mother’s heart, have been enough, after all, to bring gray hairs with sorrow to the grave! How many goodly lads, of whom we might have said, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is before us,” have, notwithstanding, proved very sons of Belial,

bringing sorrow and bitterness into their fathers' soul! There is only one form of moral life insurance and it is spirituality—the coming to Christ, being regenerated, receiving the indwelling Spirit into the heart—and setting the affections upon the eternal and the heavenly!

This done, we may look forward to a life of holiness, believing that “the course of the just will be as the shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day.” Apart from this, however, there can be no complete dependence upon the best outward signs of promise, nor upon the noblest and strongest resolutions. Many a young Hazael has said, “Is your servant a dog that he should do this thing?” And yet he has lived to do the very thing of which he would hardly dare to think! The horrible to his youthful heart became the actual deed of his later days!

I thought that this little incident of Saul's hiding himself among the stuff when he was already destined and chosen to be king was much *like what sinners do* for whom eternal mercy has provided a crown and a throne. They are hiding themselves away among the stuff. And then, again, I thought that it was very much *like what many Christians do* for whom the Covenant of Grace has provided a crown of rejoicing in feasting with Christ and living according to His example—but alas, alas, they are very worldly and seek to escape from the high honors their Lord has in store for them—they, too, hide among the stuff!

First, then, let us have—

I. A FEW WORDS WITH THE SINNER WHO IS HIDING HIMSELF AWAY AMONG THE STUFF.

I dare say he thinks tonight that if he had been Saul, he would not have been hiding himself. If it were to have his head taken off, a man might very wisely hide himself, but to have a crown put upon his head does not seem to be a reason for hiding oneself, but a reason for coming out into the open and saying, “Here I am! Do unto me as seems good to you!” But this conduct, which seems so strange in Saul, is an exact image of the behavior of many of you who are here tonight. There may be some of you here present who may be doing precisely what Saul did, only you are doing it more foolishly than he did. He did but hide away from an earthly crown, but you hide from a heavenly one! He did but shun a crown that fades—you seem as though you would avoid a crown that is undefiled and that fades not away! The crown which Saul sought to hide from no doubt brought many cares with it, for it is only too often true that—

“Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.”

But the crown which *you* are avoiding brings no care with it, but much of holy ease and joy—and that head lies easily enough which is crowned with God's crown of loving kindness and tender mercy! But you hide yourselves away from it—from the crown which Prophets and Apostles counted on, for which they were willing to sacrifice all things and counted their best prospects but as dross and dung,” that they might win it! This crown, which glittered in the martyr's eyes and made him sing as

he swam through a sea of blood to reach it—this crown is lightly valued by you—and you hide yourself away among the stuff, that you may escape from this gift of God's bountiful mercy and love!

My Brothers and Sisters, we believe there are many of God's spiritual kings who will yet be openly crowned and for whom our daily prayer ascends, but who are hiding among the stuff of worldliness! Is not worldliness the greatest sin of London? Of England? Of the world?

How we started with alarm, some of us, I mean when we heard the other day that the cholera was actually in this country and of cases reported very near to us. For my part, I thought that terrible as such an affliction would be, perhaps God might overrule it to the waking up of the slumbering multitudes of this great city. I think everyone must have observed that during the time of such visitations there is a large measure of tenderness in the public mind. Men dare not play with eternal matters when they feel them to be so near—and when death comes in the next street, or the next house, or the next room—they cannot trifle life away as formerly they did!

Something, certainly, is needed in this vast city to move the masses of our people away from downright stolid worldliness. It is not among any one class—it is common to shopkeepers, artisans and the poorest of the poor—yes, even the wealthiest of the land are perhaps the greatest worldlings of all and the most absurd with vanity and frivolity and a silly round of visits, wasting their time in giddy formalities! The day was when England attached some importance to religion. During the age of the Puritans, men talked of religion and felt ready to fight and die for the things which they held dear. But now religion is very much trifled with and the tone of the whole public press is just of this kind—that it is very much a matter of mere opinion, a matter of indifference! We seem to have gotten into an age of slumbering. Those fearful wars that are now raging abroad must wake up the public mind there to some sense of need more than this poor earth can supply, but we are so prosperous and so peaceful—and have been so long without any particular visitation—that it seems to me as if the whole of England were given up to slumber and to hiding among the stuff of worldliness! We are getting on in the world! We are prospering on the whole—though, of course, there are a few exceptions—but on the whole, things go pretty well and if there is a panic here and there, yet still it is soon over, for the heart of the nation is sound in its business prosperity—and so the mass of men hide themselves among the stuff. How are we to get at the public mind? Where, O God, shall Jonahs be found that shall move this Nineveh? Oh, when shall it ever be that a voice shall startle the slumbering millions? When, great Lord, when, from the highest to the lowest, shall Your Gospel have some respect and get an attentive hearing from the sons of men? Well, we have this reflection, that God has some even in this mass of worldliness, some whom He will surely bring in—and it is our business by earnest, indefatigable effort, to

seek to bring out these uncrowned kings who are thus hiding themselves among the stuff! We must be peering here and there, turning over this and that bale of worldliness, trying to get at some of those who shall yet enter into eternal life!

Then, in addition to worldliness, how many there are now *buried among the stuff of ignorance*. They scarcely know the meaning of the word, “sin.” Missionaries tell us that in teaching the Hindus, they find it difficult to make them understand what sin is because if you say, sin, they suppose they know what it means. They imagine it means eating meat, or touching animal food. If you speak of righteousness, they will give as their meaning for it the paying respect to a Brahmin!

But this is our difficulty in England, too, and our people, as a common rule, uninstructed and untaught, do not attach the true meaning to the word, sin, nor understand what salvation means. How glibly will they confess “we are sinners.” If they knew what it meant, they would never say it because they would be very unwilling to believe it true of them! They talk about salvation, but if they really grasped its meaning, they would eagerly seek it and press forward to obtain it—but they know not what they are to be saved from, nor into what state they are to be brought. They use the words, but the ideas are not brought home to their minds. The multitudes still believe in saving themselves by good deeds. “By the works of the Law shall no flesh living be justified,” needs as much to be thundered out in London as once it did in Wurtemberg! We need it today as much as they needed it in the days of Luther—and the simple declaration of the plain Gospel is still as much required by the sons of men as in the days when Wycliffe sent out his evangelists from Lutterworth—or Whitfield, or Wesley went through the land preaching Christ Crucified! Truly, my Brothers and Sisters, we have this comfort, that dense as this stuff of ignorance is, God will bring out His people from it and we may go on working, hoping and believing that Christ shall see of the travail of His soul! We have seen many such instances. In fact, are we not such instances ourselves? From what blackness of darkness did not God bring some of us? From what utter ignorance of everything like spiritual truth did He redeem us? We hid away among the stuff and did not even understand the ruin of the Fall, much less the salvation which He brings us and yet, blessed be His name, today He has made us kings and priests unto our God and we know Him and are known of Him! Put worldliness and ignorance together and they make a terrible heap of baggage, among which sinners may easily hide—and this will render it more imperative upon the Christian laborer to be in earnest to seek out God’s uncrowned kings!

But, dear Friends, there are some men who, not content with mere worldliness and ignorance, go into *the haunts of sin*. Oh, how many there are for whom the Savior died who are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity—slaves of lust, serving Satan with the members of their body and with all the powers of their soul! “Such were some of you,”

says the Apostle, “but you are washed; but you are sanctified”—and it must be an astounding sight to the angels if they know the blood-bought ones, if they have any idea of who those are who shall one day wear the crown and stand and sing among them—to see such persons wallowing in the mire of sin! My Brothers and Sisters! If you look back on your past state without grief and astonishment, I cannot understand you! Do you not sometimes say, “How is it that I, who am God’s child, should ever have been an enemy to Him who loved me with an everlasting love and, therefore, drew me with the bands of loving kindness?”

And perhaps there is some special sin which regretful memory will bring up before your mind tonight. You are now blood washed, now sanctified, now made an heir of Christ and you can scarcely bear to picture yourselves as having been what once you were! How Mr. John Newton, whenever he entered the pulpit to preach the Gospel of the Grace of God, must have felt astounded to find himself preaching it after having been such a blasphemer and everything else that was vile! And how John Bunyan, honest John Bunyan, when talking to the chief of sinners, must have felt as he would say, “the water standing in his eyes,” as he thought how he, too, had been a Jerusalem sinner, and yet “Grace abounding” had met with him! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we hid ourselves among the stuff, we tried to conceal ourselves from the mercy of God, yet—

**“Determined to save
He watched o’er our path,
When Satan’s blind slaves
We sported with death”—**

and He brought us out to make and crown us kings!

There are some who have hidden themselves more successfully than this if it were possible, for in addition to going great lengths in sin there are *some who abstain from any opportunities which might lead them to be saved*. We know some who never give the minister an opportunity, who take a vow that they will never enter a place of worship at all. There seems to be no likelihood of their ever being saved, for they do not lie by Bethesda’s pool, and when the water is stirred they are thoughtless and do not think of stepping in. How many we have round about us of this sort, who, if they have any thought at all about religion, it is against it! They scarcely mention the name of Jesus except to blaspheme and only think of God impiously! Their case might be hopeless were it not that we have an Almighty God to deal with. We might give up in despair the multitudes around us were it not that Christ must see of the travail of His soul and must be satisfied and, therefore, let us, in good hope, hunt among the very darkest part of the stuff, for perhaps we may find some uncrowned member of the royal family of God!

Possibly I may be speaking to one here who is hiding himself among the stuff tonight from God’s mercy, not by neglecting the means of Grace, not by going into outward sin, but by *raising difficulties in the way of his own salvation*. “Tis strange, ‘tis passing strange, ‘tis amazing,” but it is

true, that the worst enemies to a man are those within his own heart! Men will resist hope, clamor for despair, urge difficulties and seem as if they were rather intent to make their own condemnation sure than to find out anything like hope! Have I not hunted some sinners—hunted them as men hunt foxes—sought to get hold of them by some means to unearth them? Have I not dug them out of one hole and ferreted them out of another and thought that surely I had them? At one time they could not be saved because they were such great sinners. When that error was dissipated, then they thought they could not be saved because they were not great enough sinners! When that was dealt with, they found their hearts too hard. And when they were informed that Christ could soften their hard hearts, then they had not sufficient sense of need—and if they were taught that a sufficient sense of need was not a meritorious recommendation, but they were to go to the Cross to get that—then they turned to some other subterfuge and so, though a thousand refuges of lies were swept away, yet they built up more and more and more and seemed intent on making an unending task for us and to bring an unending loss upon themselves! You are hiding yourselves thus among the stuff, but may God's mercy find you! What advantage can it be to you to doubt God's mercy and readiness to save? Suppose it could be proved to a demonstration that mercy could not reach you? Why, Man, let somebody else prove it! Do not try to prove it yourself! Why should you be your own accuser? Why should you be the devil's advocate and stand up and plead against yourself? Soul, I tell you there is still hope! There is hope for you! There is hope till the jaws of death are shut! There is hope till Christ has pronounced the final sentence! So what can be your motive, you foolish one? What can be your motive for wanting to hide yourself away from the promises, to shut out the light of God's Word, to get away from the kindness of Jehovah's love?

And yet that was the way with most of us—the way with all of us, I suppose, more or less! But we were found out among the stuff. I recollect what a simpleton I thought myself for having hidden away so long. When I heard the message, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth," I seemed to say to myself, "Why, whatever have I been doing, that I could not understand that before?" You know how Bunyan puts it with regard to Christian when he put his hand into his pocket and found the key of promise—the first thing he said to Hopeful, his fellow-prisoner, was—"What a fool I am to be rotting in this stinking dungeon when I have a key in my breast that will open every lock in Doubting Castle!" And, truly, what a simpleton are you to hide yourself away from a crown, to be afraid to be made a king, to be afraid to be a child of God, to strive against receiving a gift which shall blot out your sins and cleanse you from all iniquity and bring you safe to Heaven! And yet, such folly is committed by many of us!

Now before I leave this point I should like to say to Brothers and Sisters in Christ here, "Do you not think it is the business of each one of us

here to go and hunt among the stuff to find out some of these kings who are hiding? Some of us are very likely to find them because we were once hidden there, ourselves, and we know a little bit about the place. You experienced Christians, you once were in this muddle, but have now got through it—do you not think that you should lay yourselves out to seek such perplexed souls? You who were once so worldly, may you not often speak to these worldly ones? And you who once were the chief of sinners, who more fitted than you to get at people who are now like what you were then? There are many of our villages in England where the Gospel does not prosper and I have frequently thought that the reason is this—there is no adequate ministry. Very likely in the pulpit is a very proper ministry, indeed, very admirable, but such as the people cannot easily understand. He is altogether apart from their life, their tastes and habits, and ways of thinking—and he feels it might be bringing himself down to talk as they talk—and yet they cannot bring themselves up to comprehend him! Now, if the Lord ever will bless His Churches, it seems to me that He will raise up a set of men suitable for each class—men who know the temptations of those to whom they preach! Men who have been where their hearers have been—having suffered their trials—and so can speak with both knowledge and sympathy! Let me ask you, then, you people of God, to set to work and hunt among the stuff and, who knows, but you may find a sinner there who will be well worth having because this Saul, though he did hide himself, was yet a fine fellow when they found him! He was head and shoulders taller than any off the rest in the camp—and sometimes I think that some of these big sinners that we find out among the stuff make the very best of saints! Oh, it was a grand day for the Church when Richard Weaver, the collier, was found out among the stuff, for he has been head and shoulders taller than a great many of the ministers of Christ in his line of things! And there have been many others of his kind! The Church does not often fish, but when she does, she catches her best fish. If we could but launch out a little more into the deep and the working population—and the openly sinning population could be more fully touched with the Gospel, who knows but we might find leaders for Israel's hosts and men of valor—men who love much because they have had much forgiven!

I shall now leave that point and for a short time only—

II. SPEAK TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD WHO HIDE AMONG THE STUFF.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, we can make a great many excuses for the unconverted arising from their ignorance and their lack of taste for Divine things. We can understand all that. According to their nature, their carnal minds will act. But we can make no excuses for ourselves. I think an apology is the last thing which a Christian should wish to make for himself. You and I have avoided many a crown which we might have

worn and have hidden ourselves among the stuff to escape from many a privilege which might have been both our enrichment and honor!

Let me mention one or two of these. I think among the crowns which every Christian should covet, one should be *the crown of the victorious suppliant*. Jacob won it at Jabbok. He knelt down as Jacob, but he wrestled so well that God knighted him on the spot and made him Israel! No, He did more than knight him, He placed him in the royal family, for He called him “a prevailing prince.” I seem to see Jacob coming over the brook Jabbok in the morning, limping on his thigh, but with a crown on his head which angels might have been proud to wear! He had conquered! This was the crown which Luther wore. He sometimes came down from his prayer chamber crying, “Vice! Vice!” “I have conquered! I have conquered!” He would go there and agonize with God for such-and-such a mercy till he was sure he had obtained it—and then he came down with his mouth filled with song because of it! To be a successful pleader with God is a very high attainment. God does hear the cries of His people—in a measure, of all of them—but there are some of them who understand this verse, “If you keep My commandment, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.” An obedient life has given them great power in prayer! They mind God’s will and He graciously grants them their will. They delight themselves in the Lord and He gives them the desire of their hearts.

You all know some praying men and women who can do wonders that we cannot. We are in a pinch—God hears and delivers us in our necessities—He is a prayer-hearing Lord to us! But we have not got the *carte blanche* they have to go and ask what they will and it shall be done unto them. It is possible to have it and yet not use it—we have not the power upon our knees that they have. Now, why is this? Is it not the case with all of us that it is because we have been hiding ourselves among the stuff? Why, how many Christians there are whose time for prayer is almost swallowed up through the pressure of business? God forbid that you neglect your business, but those who do most business with God are generally those who do their business best with man—and there is a great saving of time in having time with God in prayer! At any rate, prayer and provender hinder no man’s journey, but I am afraid there are some who give more time and care to worldly matters than should be given—and at the expense of their souls. What would you think of a mother who had two children and who gave to one of these children all her nutriment and all her care and left the other poor little thing to pine, to grow weakly, to be crying, to be very sick and near to death? You would say, “What an unnatural mother! Why does she fatten one child and not care for the other when they are both her children?” Now, that is your case. You have got a body and a soul. You are all day long emptying out your carefulness for your bodily gain, but what about that other dear child—let me say, that far better child, for the body only links you with the beast, but your soul, if it is a saved one, leads you into fellowship

with God—your poor soul, alas, is left starving, faint and ready to die, while the body is cared for and, perhaps, pampered! Oh, unnatural parent! And yet most of us may take this matter home and confess that we have been hiding among the stuff.

Again, do not let me be misunderstood. I am not finding fault with those who are diligent in business. I do not think there is any text in the Bible against this. Those who are slothful in business are also slothful about their soul—and there is no disease in the world worse than laziness! But to be so absorbed with business as to be always thinking of it is to give up the soul with all its noblest faculties—we are not citizens of earth—but only strangers and sojourners as all our fathers were.

It is this that so often prevents us wearing the crown of the successful pleader. We have hidden ourselves among the stuff.

There is another crown which it strikes me every Christian ought to seek to wear, and that is *the crown that Christ gives to all who come to His feast and hold fellowship with Him*. The great delight beneath the skies, next door, in fact, to Heaven, itself, is communion with the Lord Jesus Christ! And when He brings us into His banqueting house and His banner over us is love, He crowns us with the crown wherewith He was crowned in the day of His espousals—the crown of His Church's love and His love for her!

Well, you and I have worn it, but we do not always wear it, and why not? Is it not because we are too much hiding among the stuff? There is too much thinking about the family, perhaps not for God's sake, but merely for our own! Too much planning, even when we are worshipping, with a view to the eye of our fellow creatures. Why, even into this House of Prayer there may be a deal of stuff brought! A farmer may have brought his whole farm here! And in these pews, I have no doubt, many a weaver has thrown his shuttle, many a blacksmith has wielded his hammer and many a carpenter has driven his plane! You can bring your stuff here well enough without bringing it on your backs, for you can bring it in your souls—and it is just this distraction, this taking off of the mind from Divine things—which prevents our entering into spiritual fellowship. The preacher, too, knows what this is. He knows what it is to think so much about the management of the service, the ruling of the Church, the arranging this point, the setting of this Brother to work and the calling to account of this other one, that he gets to be like Martha—cumbered with much serving! And he loses the sweetness of sitting at his Master's feet. It should not be so, for it is all hiding among the stuff and, after all, is doing us real mischief. If we had more Grace, we would come out and wear the crown at all times and be kings and priests unto our God!

And, dear Friends, again. There is another crown which every Christian ought to try to win and that is *the crown of the successful laborer*. I hope we do not mean to go to Heaven without our crown, or with crowns

without any stars in them. Some of you have had many spiritual children. God has blessed many of you to the conversion of two and three and some of you, of scores! God be thanked for that! You are not an unfruitful people. You have sought to bring souls to Christ. But, alas, there are some of you who do nothing of the kind. You come here to the House of Prayer and listen to the service and are pretty well content. Your children, your families, your neighbors and the outlying world you do not try to win to Christ, nor do you seem to care much about them! God forgive you, my dear Friends, and grant that you may not hide among the stuff any longer. When you come to die, it will be a sore matter of regret to you that you did not serve your Master more! I never heard of a Christian who died lamenting he had done too much for Christ, been too earnest, too indefatigable and so had shorted his life! There have been men who have shortened their lives for Christ, but even when chided by their friends, they have only gone on, still working—and have rejoiced to die for His dear sake!

When the physician told Master John Calvin that he must cease from working so much or he would die because he had a complication of painful diseases, he replied, “Would you have my Master come and find me loitering?” Oh, it was well said, Master Calvin! It were well said, too, if we could all say it! What have you done for Christ, my Brothers and Sisters? Have you spoken a word for Him? Have you written a word for Him? Have you done *anything* for Him? If not, though you have a crown within your reach, yet you are hiding among the stuff! May you be brought out from that stuff and made to wear the crown of the successful worker!

Once more, the Master is soon coming. He will either come in the clouds in visible personal Presence, or else He will come in death. One of the two things will certainly occur before long. *When He comes He comes to crown His people— will He find us, then, among the stuff?* There are crowns and palms for all the faithful when the pierced feet shall stand on Olivet, and the multitudes shall be gathered in the Valley of Decision. He shall come gloriously upon Mount Zion with His ancients—and in that day when—

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

and when His Kingdom shall be universal, we who have been with Him in His humiliation, shall also be with Him in His Glory! But if He were to come tonight would He not find a great many of His people hiding away from their royalty, dishonoring their privileges and unworthy of their crown? “When the Son of Man comes shall He find faith upon the earth?” If He came now, how many of us would be found in places and positions far different from those in which we should wish to be found? When I called to see a friend not many months ago, I found her cleaning a doorstep, and she hardly liked me to call upon her when she was so employed. She blushed and said if she had known I had been coming she would _____. “There,” I said, “I know what you would have done—you would

have put on your best things and wasted an hour or two of your time—but I like to come and catch you just as you are.” Then she smiled, and I said, “My good woman, that is exactly how I should like the Lord to come and find me—at my work. Working for His family in some way or other—scrubbing the doorstep or doing something else—it matters not as long as He finds His people busy for Him.”

Some of my Brothers seem to be inclined to get their people to stand up with their mouths wide open gaping for the Second Advent. The true way of waiting for His blessed appearing is to work unceasingly for Him! Christ will come, will come Personally and visibly! Let this be your great joyous hope, but still believe that the best way to meet Him is with trimmed lamps and burning lights as men watching and waiting for their Lord, and not as idle star-gazers who go out and read the prophecies and stand puzzling their minds about disputed facts while souls are perishing! Oh, Brothers, we have something else to do, I hope, with the intellect of the Christian Church, than to have it forever spending itself to no profit!

I might almost say of this what Paul did of certain other matters, that it was wasting precious time and thought on “endless genealogies and old wives fables,” for in my heart of hearts I do believe them to be but very little better. Oh, if the Christian wants to be ready for his Master, as he should be, let him be contending with Christ’s foes who are many and strong! Let him be caring for Christ’s sheep, many of whom are very weak and sorely wounded. Let him work with his fellow servants and eat and drink, and bring out of the storehouse things new and old, for blessed is that servant who, when his Master comes, He shall find so doing!

Now, Christians, let me say to you in closing, do seek, as God shall help you, to get away from that baggage and that stuff of yours. Get up! Get up from those valleys where the reeking fog of earth is always lingering—get up to those healthful mountains where the breezes of Heaven fan the cheeks! Get above the mists and clouds into a clearer and serener atmosphere!. Ask the Holy Spirit to assist you in your spiritual mounting. Do not let it be said any longer that when a crown is ready for you, you are hiding away from it. May you be ready to be crowned and, being crowned, live as a king and a priest to the Glory of your Lord! May God add His blessing to these words for Jesus’ sake.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 120:1-3.**

Verse 1. *In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and He heard me.* Slander occasions distress of the most grievous kind. Those who have felt the edge of a cruel tongue know assuredly that it is sharper than the sword. Calumny awakens our indignation by a sense of injustice and yet we find ourselves helpless to fight with the evil, or to act in our own de-

fense. We could ward off the strokes of a cutlass, but we have no shield against a liar's tongue! Silence to man and prayer to God are the best cures for the evil of slander. It is of little use to appeal to our fellows on the matter of slander, for the more we stir it, the more it spreads. It is of no use to appeal to the honor of the slanderer, for they have none, and the most piteous demands for justice will only increase their malignity and encourage them to fresh insult! However, when cries to man would be our weakness, cries to God will be our strength! The ear of our God is not deaf, nor even heavy. He listens attentively, He catches the first accent of supplication. He makes each of His children confess—"He heard me."

2. *Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.* Lips are soft, but when they are "lying lips" they suck away the life of character and are as murderous as razors. Lips should never be red with the blood of honest men's reputations, nor salved with malicious lies. The faculty of speech becomes a curse when it is degraded into a mean weapon for smiting men behind their backs. Those who fawn and flatter, too, and all the while have enmity in their hearts, are horrible beings! They are the seed of the devil and he works in them after his own deceptive nature. Better to meet wild beasts and serpents than deceivers! These are a kind of monster whose birth is from beneath and whose end lies far below.

3. *What shall be given unto you? Or what shall be done unto you, you false tongue?* The Psalmist seems lost to suggest a fitting punishment! It is the worst of offenses—this detraction, calumny and slander. Judgment sharp and crushing would be measured out to it if men were visited for their transgressions. But what punishment could be heavy enough? What will God do with lying tongues? He has uttered His most terrible threats against them—and He will terribly execute them in due time.

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

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HARVEST TIME

NO. 2896

[A peculiar and even unique interest attaches to the present Sermon, as it was the first of Mr. Spurgeon's discourses that was ever printed. Although it has appeared in another form, the publishers thought that it ought to be included in the regular weekly series, so it is now reprinted exactly 50 years after it was delivered. When cholera was desolating London and the wicked war in the Crimea was still being waged, the young pastor sounded a cheerful note to comfort the Christians of that day while he also warned others of the consequences of continuance in evil-doing. The message spoken half a century ago is by no means out of date even now.—Pub.]

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 1904.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
AUGUST 11, 1854.**

***“Is today not the wheat harvest?”
1 Samuel 12:17.***

I SHALL not notice the connection, but I shall simply take these words as a slogan and my sermon will be founded upon a harvest field. I shall rather use the harvest for my text than any passage that I find here. “Is today not the wheat harvest?” I suppose the dwellers in cities think less of times and seasons than dwellers in the country. Men who were born, trained up, nourished and nurtured among cornfields, harvests, sowing and reaping, are more likely to notice such things than you who are always engaged in mercantile pursuits and think less of these things than rustics do. But I suppose if it is almost necessary that you should regard the harvest less than others, it ought not to be carried to too great an extreme. Let us not be forgetful of times and seasons. There is much to be learned from them and I would refresh your memories by a harvest field.

What a wondrous temple this world is, for in truth it is a temple of God's building wherein men ought to worship Him. What a wondrous temple it is to a mind spiritually enlightened which can bring to bear upon it the resources of intellect and the illuminations of God's Holy Spirit! There is not a single flower in it that does not teach us a lesson. There is not a single wave, or blast of thunder that has not some lesson to teach us, the sons of men. This world is a great temple and as if you walk in an Egyptian temple, you know that every mark and every figure in the temple has a meaning—so when you walk this world, everything about you has a meaning! It is no fanciful idea that there are “sermons in stones,” for there really are sermons in stones and this world is intended

to teach us by everything that we see. Happy is the man who not only has the mind, but has the spirit to get these lessons from Nature! Flowers, what are they? They are but the thoughts of God solidified—God’s beautiful thoughts put into shape. Storms, what are they? They are God’s terrible thoughts written out that we may read them. Thunders, what are they? They are God’s powerful emotions just opened that men may hear them. The world is the materializing of God’s thoughts, for the world is a thought in God’s eyes. He made it first from a thought that came from His own mighty mind and everything in the majestic temple that He has made has a meaning!

In this temple there are four evangelists. As we have four great evangelists in the Bible, so there are four evangelists in Nature—and these are the four evangelists of the seasons—spring, summer, autumn, winter.

First comes spring and what does it say? We look and we behold that by the magic touch of spring, insects which seemed to be dead begin to awaken and seeds that were buried in the dust begin to lift up their radiant forms. What does spring say? It utters its voice, it says to man, “Though you sleep, you shall rise again. There is a world in which, in a more glorious state, you shall exist. You are but a seed, now, and you shall be buried in the dust and in a little while you shall arise.” Spring utters that part of its evangel. Then comes summer. Summer says to man, “Behold the goodness of a merciful Creator—‘He makes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good’—He sprinkles the earth with flowers, He adorns it with those gems of creation, He makes it blossom like Eden and bring forth like the Garden of the Lord.” Summer utters that. Then comes autumn. We shall hear its message. It passes and winter comes forth crowned with a coronal of ice and it tells us that there are times of trouble for man. It points to the fruits that we have stored up in autumn, and it says to us, “Man, take heed that you store up something for yourself—something against the day of wrath. Lay up for yourself the fruits of autumn, that you may be able to feed on them in winter.” And when the old year expires, its death knell tells us that man must die. And when the year has finished its evangelistic mission, there comes another to preach the same lesson again.

We are about to let autumn preach. One of these four evangelists comes forth and it says, “Is today not the wheat harvest?” We are about to take the harvest into consideration in order to learn something from it. May God’s most blessed Spirit help His feeble dust and ashes to preach the unsearchable riches of God to your souls’ profit!

We shall talk of three joyful harvests and of three sorrowful harvests.

I. First, we shall speak of THREE JOYFUL HARVESTS that there will be.

The first joyful harvest that I will mention is *the harvest of the field* which Samuel alluded to when he said, “Is today not the wheat harvest?” We cannot forget the harvest of the field. It is not right that these things should be forgotten. We ought not to let the fields be covered with corn, have their treasures stored away in the barns and all the while to remain forgetful of God’s mercy. Ingratitude, that worst of evils, is one of the vi-

pers which make their nest in the heart of man—and the creature cannot be slain until Divine Grace comes and sprinkles the blood of the Cross upon man's heart. Such vipers die when the blood of Christ is upon them. Let me just lead you for a moment to a harvest field. You shall see there a most luxuriant harvest, the heavy ears bending down almost to touch the ground, as much as to say, "From the ground I came. I owe myself to the ground—to that I bow my head"—just as the good Christian does when he is full of years. He holds his head down the more fruit he has upon him. You see the stalks with their heads hanging down because they are ripe. And it is goodly and precious to see these things!

Now just suppose the opposite. If this year the ears had been blighted and withered. If they had been like the second ears that Pharaoh saw—very lean and very scanty—what would have become of us? In peace, we might have depended on large supplies from Russia to make up the deficiency. Now, in times of war, referring to the war in the Crimea, when nothing can come, what would become of us? We may conjecture, we may imagine, but I do not know that we are able to come to the truth. We can only say, "Blessed be God, we have not yet to reckon on what *would* have been. But He, seeing one door closed, has opened another." Seeing that we might not get supplies from those rich fields in the South of Russia, He has opened another door in our own land. "You are My own favored island," He says, "I have loved you, England, with a special love. You are My favored one and the enemy shall not crush you. And lest you should starve because provisions are cut off, I will give you full barns at home and your fields shall be covered, that you may laugh your enemy to scorn and say to him, 'You thought you could starve us and make us perish, but He who feeds the ravens has fed His people and has not deserted His favored land.'"

There is not one person who is uninterested in this matter! Some say the poor ought to be thankful that there is abundance of bread. So ought the rich! There is nothing which happens to one member of society which does not affect all. The ranks lean upon one another—if there is scarcity in the lower ranks, it falls upon the next and the next—and even the Queen upon her throne feels in some degree the scarcity when God is pleased to send it. It affects all men. Let none say, "Whatever the price of corn may be, I can live," but rather bless God who has given you more than enough! Your prayer ought to be, "Give us this day our daily bread," and remember that whatever wealth you have, you must attribute your daily mercies as much to God as if you lived from hand to mouth. And sometimes that is a blessed way of living—when God gives His children the hand-basket portion instead of sending it in a mass. Bless God that He has sent an abundant harvest! O fearful ones, lift up your heads! And you discontented ones, be you abashed and let your discontent no more be known! The Jews used to observe the feast of tabernacles when the harvest time came. In the country they always have a "harvest home" and why should not we? I want you all to have one. Rejoice! Rejoice! Rejoice! For the harvest is come—"Is today not the wheat harvest?" Poor desponding Soul, let all your doubts and fears be gone. "Your bread shall be given you and your waters shall be sure." That is one joyful harvest!

Now, the second joyful harvest is *the harvest of every Christian*. In one sense, the Christian is a seed. In another, he is a sower. In one sense, he is a seed sown by God which is to grow, ripen and germinate till the great harvest time. In another sense every Christian is a sower sent into the world to sow good seed and to sow good seed only. I do not say that Christian men never sow any other seed than good seed. Sometimes, in unguarded moments, they take garlic into their hands instead of wheat—and we may sow tares instead of corn. Christians sometimes make mistakes and God sometimes allows His people to fall so that they sow sins—but the Christian never reaps his sins—Christ reaps them for him. He often has to have a concoction made of the bitter leaves of sin, but he never reaps the fruit of it. Christ has borne the punishment! Yet bear in mind, if you and I sin against God, God will take our sin and He will get an essence from it that will be bitter to our taste! Though He does not make us eat the fruits, yet He will still make us grieve and sorrow over our sins. But the Christian, as I have said, should be employed in sowing good seed and, doing so, he shall have a glorious harvest!

In some sense or other, the Christian must be sowing seed. If God calls him to the ministry, he is a seed sower. If God calls him to the Sabbath school, he is a seed sower. Whatever his office, he is a sower of seed. I sow seed broadcast all over this immense field—I cannot tell where my seed goes. Some are like barren ground and they refuse to receive the seed that I sow. I cannot help it if any man should do so. I am only responsible to God, whose servant I am. There are others and my seed falls upon them and brings forth a little fruit, but, by-and-by, when the sun is up, because of persecution, they wither away and they die. But I hope there are many who are like the good ground that God has prepared—and when I scatter the seed abroad, it falls on good ground and brings forth fruit to an abundant harvest! Ah, the minister has a joyful harvest, even in this world, when he sees souls converted! I have had a harvest time when I have led the sheep down to the washing of Baptism, when I have seen God's people coming out from the mass of the world and telling what the Lord has done for their souls! When God's children are edified and built up, it is worth living for and worth dying ten thousand deaths for to be the means of saving one soul! What a joyful harvest it is when God gives us converted ones by tens and hundreds—and adds to His Church abundantly such as shall be saved!

Now I am like a farmer just at this season of the year. I have got a good deal of wheat down and I want to get it into the barn for fear the rain comes and spoils it. I believe I have got a great many, but they will persist in standing out in the field. I want to get them into the barns. They are good people, but they do not like to make a profession and join the Church. I want to get them into my Master's granary and to see Christians added to the Church. I see some holding down their heads and saying, "He means us." So I do. You ought to have joined Christ's Church before this and unless you are fit to be gathered into Christ's little garner here on earth, you have no right to anticipate being gathered into that great garner which is in Heaven!

Every Christian has his harvest. The Sabbath school teacher has his harvest. He goes and toils and often he plows very stony ground, but he shall have his harvest. Oh, poor laboring Sabbath school teacher, have you seen no fruit yet? Do you say, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Cheer up, you do labor in a good cause—there must be some to do your work. Have you seen no children converted? Fear not—

***"Though seed lies buried long in dust,
It shan't deceive your hope.
The precious grain can never be lost,
For God insures the crop."***

Go on sowing and you shall have a harvest when you shall see children converted! I have known some Sabbath school teachers who could count a dozen, or twenty, or thirty children who have, one after another, come to know the Lord Jesus Christ and to join the Church. But if you should not live to see it on earth, remember, you are only accountable for your labor—not for your success! Sow still, toil on! "Cast your bread upon the waters: for you shall find it after many days." God will not allow His Word to be wasted—it shall not return to Him void, but shall accomplish that which He pleases. There may be a poor mother who has often been sad. She has a son and a daughter and she has been praying that God might convert their souls. Mother, your son is still an ungainly boy. He grieves your heart. The hot tears still scald your cheeks on account of him. And you, Father, you have reproved him often. He is a wayward son and he is still running the downward road. Cease not to pray! O my Brothers and Sisters who are parents, you shall have a harvest!

There was a boy once, a very sinful child who listened not to the counsel of his parents. But his mother prayed for him and now he stands to preach to this congregation every Sabbath. And when his mother thinks of her first-born preaching the Gospel, she reaps a glorious harvest that makes her a glad woman! Now, Fathers and Mothers, such may be your case. However bad your children are at present, still press toward the Throne of Grace and you shall have a harvest. What do you think, Mother, would you not rejoice to see your son a minister of the Gospel, your daughter teaching and assisting in the cause of God? God will not allow you to pray and your prayers be unheeded!

Young man, your mother has been wrestling for you a long time and she has not won your soul yet. What do you think? You cheat your mother of her harvest! If she had a little patch of ground, hard by her cottage, where she had sown some wheat, would you go and burn it? If she had a choice flower in her garden would you go and trample it under foot? But by going on in the ways of the reprobate, you are cheating your father and your mother of their harvest! Perhaps there are some parents who are weeping over their sons and daughters who are hardened and unconverted. O God, turn their hearts! Bitter is the doom of that man who goes to Hell over the road that is washed by his mother's tears, stumbles over his father's reproofs and tramples on those things which God has put in his way—his mother's prayers and his father's sighs! God help that man who dares to do such a thing as that! And it is wondrous Grace if He does help him.

You shall have a harvest, whatever you are doing. I trust you are all doing *something*. If I cannot mention what your peculiar engagement is, I trust you are all serving God in some way—and you shall assuredly have a harvest wherever you are scattering your seed. But suppose the worst—if you should never live to see the harvest in this world, you shall have a harvest when you get to Heaven! If you live and die a disappointed man in this world, you shall not be disappointed in the next! I think how surprised some of God's people will be when they get to Heaven. They will see their Master and He will give them a crown, "Lord, what is that crown for?" "That crown is because you gave a cup of cold water to one of My disciples." "What? A crown for a cup of cold water?" "Yes," says the Master, "that is how I pay My servants. First I give them Grace to give the cup of water and then, having given them Grace, I give them a crown." "Wonders of Grace belong to God!" He that sows liberally shall reap liberally and he that sows grudgingly shall reap sparingly.

Ah, if there could be grief in Heaven, I think it would be the grief of some Christians who had sown so very little. After all, how little the most of us ever sow! I know I sow but very little compared with what I might. How little any of you sow! Just add up how much you give to God in the year. I am afraid it would not come to a farthing per cent. Remember, you reap according to what you sow. O my Friends, what surprise some of you will feel when God pays you for sowing one single grain! The soil of Heaven is rich in the extreme. If a farmer had such ground as there is in Heaven, he would say, "I must sow a great many acres of land." And so let us strive, for the more we sow, the more shall we reap in Heaven. Yet remember it is all of Grace and not of debt!

Now, Beloved, I must very hastily mention the third joyful harvest. We have had the harvest of the field and the harvest of the Christian. We are now to have another—and that is *the harvest of Christ*.

Christ had His sowing times. What bitter sowing times they were! Christ was One who went out bearing precious seed. Oh, I picture Christ sowing the world! He sowed it with tears. He sowed it with drops of blood. He sowed it with sighs. He sowed it with agony of heart and, at last He sowed *Himself* in the ground, to be the seed of a glorious crop! What a sowing time His was! He sowed in tears, in poverty, in sympathy, in grief, in agony, in woes, in suffering and in death. He shall have a harvest, too. Blessings on His name, Jehovah swears it! The everlasting predestination of the Almighty has settled that Christ shall have a harvest! He has sown and He shall reap! He has scattered and He shall gather in. "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands." My Friends, Christ has begun to reap His harvest! Yes, every soul that is converted is part of His reward! Everyone who comes to the Lord is a part of it. Every soul that is brought out of the miry clay and set on the King's Highway is a part of Christ's crop. But He is going to reap more! There is another harvest coming, in the latter day, when He shall reap armfuls at a time and gather the sheaves into His garner. Now men come to Christ in ones and twos and threes—but then they shall come in flocks, so that the Church shall say, "Who are these that come in as doves to their windows?"

There shall be a greater harvest when time shall be no more. Turn to the 14th Chapter of Revelation, and the 13th verse—"And I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yes, says the Spirit that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." They do *not go before* them and *win* them Heaven. "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud One sat like unto the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Your sickle, and reap: for the time is come for You to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." That was Christ's harvest. Observe but one particular. When Christ comes to reap His field, He comes with a crown on His head. There are the nations gathered together before that crowned Reaper!—

***"They come, they come—the exiled bands!
Wherever they rest or roam
They heard His voice in distant lands,
And hastened to their home."***

There they stand, one great army before God. Then comes the crowned Reaper from His Throne. He takes His sharp sickle—see Him reap sheaf after sheaf—and He carries them up to the heavenly garner. Let us ask the question of ourselves, whether we shall be among the reaped ones—the wheat of the Lord?

Notice again, that there was first a harvest, and then a vintage. The harvest is the righteous—the vintage is the wicked. When the wicked are gathered, an angel gathers them. But Christ will not trust an angel to reap the righteous. "He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle." O my Soul, when you come to die, Christ will, Himself, come for you—when you are to be cut down, He that sits upon the Throne will cut you down with a very sharp sickle in order that He may do it as easily as possible. He will be the Reaper, Himself—no reaper will be allowed to gather Christ's saints in, but Christ, the King of saints! Oh, will it not be a joyful harvest when all the chosen race, every one of them, shall be gathered in? There is a little shriveled grain of wheat that has been growing somewhere on the headland and that will be there. There are a great many who have been hanging down their heads, heavy with grain, and they will be there, too. They will all be gathered in—

***"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep!
All that His heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep!"***

II. But now we are obliged to turn to THE THREE SAD HARVESTS. Alas! Alas! The world was once like an Eolian harp—every wind that blew upon it gave forth melody. Now the strings are all unstrung and they are full of discord so that when we have a strain of joy, we must have the deep bass of grief to come after it.

The first sad harvest is *the harvest of death*. We are all living, and what for? For the grave. I have sometimes sat down and had a reverie like this. I have thought—Man, what is he? He grows and grows till he

comes to his prime. And when he is forty-five, if God spares him, perhaps he has then gained the prime of life. What does he do then? He continues where he is a little while and then he goes down the hill. And if he keeps on living, what is it for? To die. But there are many chances to one, as the world has it, that he will not live to be seventy. He may die very early. Do we not all live to die? But none shall die till they are ripe. Death never reaps his corn green, he never cuts his corn till it is ripe. The wicked die, but they are always ripe for Hell when they die. The righteous die, but they are always ripe for Heaven when they die. That poor thief there, who had not believed in Jesus—perhaps an hour before he died he was as ripe as a 70 years saint. The saint is always ready for glory whenever Death, the reaper, comes, and the wicked are always ripe for Hell whenever God pleases to send for them.

Oh, that great reaper! He sweeps through the earth and mows his hundreds and thousands down! It is all still—Death makes no noise about his movements and he treads with velvet footsteps over the earth. That ceaseless mower, none can resist him! He is irresistible and he mows, and mows, and cuts them down! Sometimes he stops and whets his scythe—he dips his scythe in blood and then he mows us down with war. Then he takes his whetstone of cholera and mows down more than ever. Still he cries, “More! More! More!” Ceaselessly that work keeps on! Wondrous mower! Wondrous reaper! Oh, when you come to reap me, I cannot resist you, for I must fall like others—when you come, I shall have nothing to say to you. Like a blade of corn I must stand motionless and you must cut me down! But, oh, may I be prepared for your scythe! May the Lord stand by me and comfort me and cheer me—and may I find that Death is an angel of life—that death is the portal of Heaven, the vestibule of Glory!

There is a second sad harvest and that is *the harvest that the wicked man has to reap*. Thus says the voice of Inspiration, “Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” Now there is a harvest that every wicked man has to reap in this world. No man ever sins against *his body* without reaping a harvest for it. The young man says, “I have sinned with impunity.” Stop, young man! Go to that hospital and see sufferers writhing in their agony. See that staggering, bloated wretch and I tell you, stop your sinning lest you become like he! Wisdom bids you stop, for your steps lead down to Hell. If you enter into the house of the strange woman, you shall reap a harvest. There is a harvest that every man reaps if he sins against *his fellows*. The man who sins against his fellow creature shall reap a harvest. Some men walk through the world like knights with spurs on their heels and think they may tread on whom they please—but they shall find their mistake. He who sins against others, sins against himself—that is Nature. It is a law in Nature that a man cannot hurt his fellows without hurting himself.

Now, you who cause grief to others minds, do not think the grief will end there. You will have to reap a harvest even here. Again, a man cannot sin against his estate without reaping the effects of it. The miserly wretch who hoards up his gold, sins against his gold. It becomes cankered and from those golden sovereigns he will have to reap a harvest.

Yes, that miserly wretch, sitting up at night and straining his weary eyes to count his gold—that man reaps his harvest. And so does the young spendthrift. He will reap his harvest when all his treasure is exhausted. It is said of the prodigal, that “no man gave to him”—none of those that he used to entertain—and so the prodigal shall find it. No man shall give anything to him. Ah, but the worst harvest will be that of those who sin against *the Church of Christ*. I would not that a man should sin against *his body*. I would not that a man should sin against *his estate*. I would not that a man should sin against *his fellows*, but, most of all, I would not have him touch Christ’s Church! He that touches one of God’s people, touches the apple of His eye.

When I have read of some people finding fault with the servants of the Lord, I have thought within myself, “I would not do so.” It is the greatest insult to a man to speak ill of his children. You speak ill of *God’s children* and you will be rewarded for it in everlasting punishment! There is not a single one of God’s family whom God does not love—and if you touch one of them, He will have vengeance on you. Nothing puts a man on his mettle like touching his children and if you touch God’s Church, you will have the direst vengeance of all! The hottest flames of Hell are for those who touch God’s children! Go on, Sinner, laugh at religion if you please, but know that it is the blackest sin in the whole catalog of crime. God will forgive anything sooner than that—and though that is not unpardonable, yet, if not repented of, it will meet the greatest punishment. God cannot bear that His elect should be touched. And if you do so, it is the greatest crime you can commit.

The third sad harvest is *the harvest of almighty wrath*, when the wicked at last are gathered in. In the 14th Chapter of Revelation, you will see that the vine of the earth was cast into the winepress of the wrath of God and, after that, the winepress was trodden outside the city and blood came out up to the horses’ bridles—an amazing figure to express the wrath of God! Suppose, then, some great winepress in which our bodies are put like grapes. And suppose some mighty giant comes and treads us all under foot? That is the idea—that the wicked shall be cast together and be trodden underfoot until the blood runs out up to the horses’ bridles! May God grant, of His Sovereign Mercy, that you and I may never be reaped in that fearful harvest—but that rather we may be written among the saints of the Lord!

You shall have a harvest in due season if you faint not. Sow on, Brother! Sow on, Sister! And in due time you shall reap an abundant harvest. Let me tell you one thing if the seed you have sown a long while, has never come up. I was told once, “When you sow seeds in your garden, put them in a little water overnight—they will grow all the better for it.” So, if you have been sowing your seed, put it into tears and it will make your seed germinate better. “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.” Steep your seed in tears and then put it into the ground—and you shall reap in joy. No bird can devour that seed! No bird can hold it in its mouth! No worm can eat it, for worms never eat seeds that are sown in tears.

Go your way and when you weep most, then it is that you sow best. When most cast down, you are doing best. If you come to the Prayer Meeting and have not a word to say, keep on praying! Do not give it up, for you often pray best when you think you pray worst. Go on, and in due season, by God's mighty Grace, you shall reap if you faint not.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 SAMUEL 12.**

In Samuel's old age the people desired to have a king. And though it went much against the grain, yet, by the Lord's advice, Samuel consented to it. Here he makes his last protest.

Verse 1. *And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that you said unto me, and have made a king over you. "I have not stood in your way. I have not sought my own honor. I have at once frankly resigned my office among you."*

2. *And now, behold, the king walks before you: and I am old and gray-headed; and behold, my sons are with you and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day.* "My sons come here today, not as my successors, but as fellow subjects with you of your newly-chosen king; they are not in opposition to him anymore than I am." Like an old servant who is about to be dismissed, Samuel asks them to bear witness to his character—and this he does partly as a lesson to the king who had taken his place and partly as a clearance of himself in rendering up his charge.

3. *Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD, and before His anointed—whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Or whom I have oppressed? Or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind my eyes? And I will restore it to you.* It is so usual a thing, among Oriental judges and rulers, to expect bribes that you cannot, in those countries, take a single step in a court of law without bribery. It was therefore a very unusual circumstance that Samuel should be able to challenge anybody to say that he had ever wrongfully taken so much as a single farthing. And the great rulers in those countries are accustomed to enrich themselves by levying heavy taxes upon the people. But Samuel affirmed that his services had been perfectly gratuitous, so that all he had done for the people had cost them nothing. If they had any fault to find with his government, it could only be because it had been so just and also so cheap—his yoke had indeed been easy to their necks! What a fine sight it is to see an old man thus able to challenge all who had known him throughout a long life to testify that he had not led a selfish life, or profited from his own interests even in the least degree!

4, 5. *And they said, You have not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither have you taken anything of any man's hand. And he said unto them, The LORD is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.* In the most solemn way, they cleared him. When he rendered to them the account of his stewardship, they all bore witness that every-

thing had been done, not merely according to strict rectitude, but in the most generous spirit of self-consecration. May all of us be enabled to live as that, so when our sun goes down, it shall be as cloudless a sunset as was that of Samuel!

6-8. *And Samuel said unto the people, It is the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which He did to you and to your fathers. When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place.* A remembrance of past mercies is very profitable to us. National mercies ought not to be forgotten and personal favors should always be fresh in our memory. Alas, the old proverb is only too true, "Bread that is eaten is soon forgotten." So is it even with the bread which God gives us—we eat it, yet soon forget the hand that fed us. Let it not be so with us.

9-11. *And when they forgot the LORD their God, He sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the King of Moab, and they fought against them. And they cried unto the Lord, and said, we have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve You. And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you dwelled safely.* They often transgressed and were as often afflicted. But whenever they returned to the Lord with their confession of sin and again sought His mercy, He was always quick to deliver them. Let us profit by their experience. Have we brought ourselves into trouble through sin? Have we wandered and backslidden and are our hearts, therefore, heavy? Let us return unto the Lord and confess our sin, for He has not cast us away, He will turn again at the voice of our cry! He will forgive us and graciously receive us unto Himself again.

12, 13. *And when you saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, you said unto me, No, but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God was your king. Now therefore behold the king whom you have chosen, and whom you have desired! And, behold, the LORD has set a king over you.* "He has consented to your request, though it was a foolish one." Remember, Brothers and Sisters, it is not every answer to prayer that is a token of God's favor. If our prayers are very foolish and even if there is sin in them, God may sometimes give us what we ask in order to show us our folly and make us smart for having offered such a prayer. Though, under God's government, they had been most highly privileged, they felt they must have a king like the nations which were not so favored. "So now," says Samuel, "God has given you this king, so do your best with him." Samuel had a hopeful spirit and he hoped that though the circumstances were not as he would have wished them to be, yet that the people might do well, after all.

14-17. *If you will fear the LORD and serve Him, and obey His voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both you*

and also the king that reigns over you continue following the LORD your God. But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers. Now therefore stand and see this great thing which the LORD will do before your eyes. Is today not the wheat harvest? I will call unto the LORD, and He shall send thunder and rain; that you may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking for a king. This was to be a token to them that Samuel was God's Prophet. On a previous occasion, in answer to his prayer, God had thundered against the Philistines. But this time His thunder was His voice against Israel! In reading the Bible we must always remember that it was not written in England but in Palestine. Wheat harvest there takes place about the month of May—when the weather is usually settled and such things as thunder and rain are almost unknown. It was extraordinary, therefore, as when we speak of “a bolt out of the blue.”

18, 19. *So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for your servants unto the LORD your God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask for a king. That thunderstorm was a powerful preacher to them and the rain drops that fell so copiously brought the teardrops in their eyes. The phenomena of Nature frequently impress men with a sense of God's power and prostrates them before Him.*

20-22. *And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: you have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart, and turn you not aside: for then should you go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain. For the LORD will not forsake His people for His great name's sake: because it has pleased the LORD to make you His people. How gently the old Prophet speaks! What a change from the pealing thunder to this gracious voice! It seems like the clear shining after rain.*

23-25. *Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things He has done for you. But if you shall still do wickedly, you shall be consumed—both you and your king.*

—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.**

SAMUEL—AN EXAMPLE OF INTERCESSION NO. 1537

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 9, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against
the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will
teach you the good and the right way.”
1 Samuel 12:23.***

It is a very great privilege to be permitted to pray for our fellow men. Prayer in each man's case must necessarily begin with personal petition, for until the man is, himself, accepted with God, he cannot act as an intercessor for others. And herein lies part of the excellence of intercessory prayer, for it is to the man who exercises it aright a mark of inward Grace and a token for good from the Lord. You may be sure that your King loves you when He will permit you to speak a word to Him on behalf of your friends. When the heart is enlarged in believing supplication for others, all doubts about *personal* acceptance with God may cease. He who prompts us to love has certainly given us that love and what better proof of His favor do we desire?

It is a great advance upon anxiety for our own salvation when we have risen out of the narrowness of dread about ourselves into the broader region of care for a Brother's soul. He who, in answer to his intercession, has seen others blessed and saved, may take it as a pledge of Divine Love and rejoice in the condescending Grace of God! Such prayer rises higher than any petition for ourselves, for only he who is in favor with the Lord can venture upon pleading for others. Intercessory prayer is an act of communion with Christ, for Jesus pleads for the sons of men. It is a part of His priestly office to make intercession for His people. He has ascended up on High to this end and exercises this office continually within the veil.

When we pray for our fellow sinners we are in sympathy with our Divine Savior who made intercession for the transgressors. Such prayers are often of unspeakable value to those for whom they are offered. Many of us trace our conversion, if we go to the root of it, to the prayers of certain godly persons. In innumerable instances the prayers of parents have availed to bring young people to Christ. Many more will have to bless God for praying teachers, praying friends, praying pastors. Obscure persons

confined to their beds are often the means of saving hundreds by their continual pleadings with God. The Book of Remembrance will reveal the value of these hidden ones, of whom so little is thought by the majority of Christians. As the body is knit together by bands and sinews and interlacing nerves and veins, so is the whole body of Christ converted into a living unity by mutual prayers—we were prayed for and now, in turn, we pray for others!

Not only the conversion of sinners, but the welfare, preservation, growth, comfort and usefulness of saints are abundantly promoted by the prayers of their Brothers and Sisters and, therefore, Apostolic men cried, “Brethren, pray for us.” He who was the personification of love said, “Pray, one for another, that you may be healed.” And our great Lord and Head ended His earthly career by a matchless prayer for those whom the Father had given Him. Intercessory prayer is a benefit to the man who exercises it and is often a better channel of comfort than any other means of Grace. The Lord turned, again, the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. Even where such prayer does not avail for its precise objective, it has its results. David tells us that he prayed for his enemies—he says, in Psalm 35:13, “As for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting.”

And he adds, “my prayer returned into my own bosom.” He sent forth his intercession, like Noah’s dove, but as it found no rest for the sole of its feet and no blessing came of it, it returned to him who sent it and brought back with it an olive leaf plucked off—a sense of peace to his own spirit—for nothing is more restful to the heart than to have prayed for those who despitefully use us and persecute us. Prayers for others are pleasing to God and profitable to ourselves! They are no waste of breath, but have a guaranteed result by the faithful Promiser.

I. Let us first dwell upon Samuel’s habit of intercession, for it was most manifest in him. We gather this from the text. He says, “God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.” It is clear, therefore, that he had been in the continual habit and practice of praying for Israel. He could not speak of ceasing to pray if he had not, up to now, continued in prayer! Samuel had become so rooted in the habit of prayer for the people that he seems to be amazed at the very *thought* of bringing his intercession to an end! The people, measuring the Prophet by themselves, half suspected that he would be irritated with them and would, therefore, deny them his prayers. Therefore in the 19th verse we read, “All the people said unto Samuel, Pray for your servants unto the Lord your God, that we die not.”

They greatly valued his prayers and felt as if their national life and, perhaps, their *personal* lives depended upon his pleading for them—

therefore they urged him, as men who plead for their lives, that he would not cease to pray for them and he replied, “God forbid that I should.” The denial of his prayers does not seem to have entered his thoughts. To my mind the words represent him as astonished at the idea—horrified and half indignant at the suggestion—“What? I, Samuel, I who have been your servant from my childhood since the day when I put on the little ephod and waited for you in the house of the Lord? I that have lived for you and have loved you and was willing to have died in your service, shall I ever cease to *pray* for you?”

He says, “God forbid.” It is the strongest expression that one can well imagine and this, together with his evident surprise, shows that the Prophet’s habit of intercession was rooted, constant, fixed, abiding—a part and parcel of himself. If you will read of his life you will see how truly this was the case. Samuel was born of prayer. A woman of a sorrowful spirit received him from God and joyfully exclaimed, “For this child I prayed.” He was named in prayer, for his name, Samuel, signifies “asked of God.” Well did he carry out his name and prove its prophetic accuracy, for having commenced life by being, himself, asked of God, he continued asking of God and all his knowledge, wisdom, justice and power to rule were things which came to him because “asked of God”!

He was nurtured by a woman of prayer at the first and when he left her, it was to dwell in the *house of prayer* all the days of his life. His earliest days were honored by a Divine visitation and he showed, even then, that waiting, watchful spirit which is the very knee of prayer. “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears” is the cry of a simple, sincere heart, such as the Lord always accepts! We all think of Samuel under that little figure so often painted and sculptured in which a sweet child is seen in the attitude of prayer. We all seem to know little Samuel, the praying child—our boys and girls know him as a familiar friend—but it is as kneeling with clasped hands. He was born, named, nurtured, housed and trained in prayer and he never departed from the way of supplication.

In His case the text was fulfilled, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings You have perfected praise” and he so persevered in prayer that he brought forth fruit in old age and testified of God’s power to those who came after him. So famous did Samuel become as an intercessor that if you will turn to the 99th Psalm, at the sixth verse, you will read a short but very fragrant eulogy of him—“Moses and Aaron among His priests and Samuel among them that call upon His name.” If Moses and Aaron are selected as being consecrated men, leaders of God’s Israel in service and sacrifice, Samuel is selected as the *praying* man, the man who calls upon God’s name. All Israel knew Samuel was an intercessor as well as they knew Aaron as a priest.

Perhaps even more notably you get the same Inspired estimate of him in Jeremiah 15, at the first verse, where he is again classed with Moses—“Then said the Lord unto me, though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be favorable toward this people: cast them out of My sight and let them go forth.” Here there is no doubt an allusion to the prevalent prayer of Moses, when in the agony of his heart, he cried, “If not, blot me, I pray You, out of Your Book which you have written.” This was a high form of pleading, but such is God’s valuation of Samuel as an intercessor, that He puts him side by side with Moses and, by way of threat to sinful Israel, He tells Jeremiah that He would not even listen to Moses and Samuel if they stood before Him!

It is well to learn the art of prayer in our earliest days, for then we grow up to be proficient in it. Early prayer grows into powerful prayer. Hear this, you young people, and may the Lord now make Samuels of you! What an honor to be called to intercede for others, to be the benefactor of our nation, or even the channel of blessing to our own households! Aspire to it, my dear young Friends. Perhaps you will never preach, but you may pray. If you cannot climb the pulpit, you may surely bow before the Mercy Seat and be quite as great a blessing! As to the success of Samuel’s prayers, read of his life and you will find that he worked great deliverances for the people. In the seventh chapter of this book we find that the Philistines grievously oppressed Israel and Samuel bravely called the people together to consider their condition and bade them turn from idolatry and worship the only true God. And he promised them his prayers as a gift which they greatly valued.

These are his words—“Gather all Israel to Mizpeh and I will pray for you unto the Lord.” He then took a lamb and offered it up for a burnt offering wholly unto the lord, “and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel and the Lord heard him.” This is one of the grand events of his life and yet it is fairly descriptive of his whole career. He cried and the Lord heard! In this instance the Israelites marched to battle, but Jehovah went before them, in answer to the Prophet’s prayer. You could hear the rolling of the drums in the march of the God of Armies and see the glittering of His spear, for so is the history of the battle recorded—“And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh and pursued the Philistines and smote them.”

The conclusion of the whole is, “So the Philistines were subdued,” that is to say, the prayer of Samuel was the conquering weapon and Philistia crouched beneath its power! Oh you who know the power of prayer, write this on your banners, “So the Philistines were subdued.” Samuel’s prayers

were so prevalent that the very *elements* were controlled by him. Oh, the power of prayer! It has been ridiculed—it has been represented as an unscientific and an unpractical thing—but we who daily try it know that its power cannot be exaggerated and do not feel even a shadow of a doubt concerning it! There is such power in prayer that it “moves the arm that moves the world.” We have but to know how to pray and the thunder shall lift up its voice in answer to our cry and Jehovah’s arrows shall be scattered abroad to the overthrowing of His adversaries! How should those be able to judge of prayer who never ask at all, or never ask in faith? Let those bear witness to whom prayer is a familiar exercise and to whom answers from God are as common as the day! Over a father’s heart no power has so great a control as his child’s needs and in the case of our Father who is in Heaven, it is especially so! He must hear prayer, for He cannot dishonor His own name, or forget His own children!

When, in his old age, the people began to turn against Samuel and to express dissatisfaction with his unworthy sons, it is beautiful to notice how Samuel at once resorted to prayer. Look at the 8th chapter, the 5th verse—the people “said unto him, Behold, you are old and your sons walk not in your ways: now make us a king to judge us.” The old man was sorely grieved. It was natural that he should be. But look at the next words. Did Samuel scold the people? Did he send them home in a huff? No. It is written, “And Samuel prayed unto the Lord.” He told his Master about them and his Master said to him, “Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto you: for they have not rejected you”—do not lay it to heart as if it were a personal affront to *you*—“but they have rejected *Me*, that I should not reign over them.”

This slight upon God’s servant was a rejection of God Himself and He would not have Samuel lay to heart their ingratitude to him, but think of their wicked conduct to the Lord their God. Thus, you see, Samuel was a man of abundant prayer and in the 21st verse we read that after he had entered his protest and told the people of all that they would have to suffer from a king—how he would tax them and oppress them and take their sons to be soldiers and their daughters to wait in his palace and take their fields and vineyards, though they still persisted in saying, “No, but we will have a king”—he made no angry answer but returned to his God in secret communion. “Samuel heard all the words of the people and he rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord.”

Oh, that we were wise enough to do the same! Instead of going about and telling one and another of the opprobrious things that have been said about us, it were well to go straight away to our closet and rehearse them in the ears of the Lord! Samuel was thus, you see, throughout his whole official life, a man mighty in prayer and when the people left him and fol-

lowed after their new-made king, our text shows that he did not cease to intercede for them. He says, “God forbid that I should cease to pray to God for you.” Nor was this all—when Saul had turned aside and become a traitor to his Divine Lord, Samuel made intercession for *him*. One whole night he spent in earnest entreaty, though it was all in vain. But many a time and often did he sigh for the rejected prince. The old man had been, from his youth up, an intercessor and he never ceased from the holy exercise till his lips were closed in death.

Now, Beloved, you are not judges of the land, otherwise would I plead with you to pray much for the people whom you rule. You are not all pastors and teachers, otherwise would I say that if we do not abound in prayer the blood of souls will be upon our garments. Some of you, however, are teachers of the young—do not think that you have done anything for your classes till you have prayed for them! Be not satisfied with the hour or two of teaching in the week—be frequent in your loving supplications. Many of you are parents. How can you discharge your duty towards your children unless you bear their names upon your hearts in prayer? Those of you who are not found in these relationships have, nevertheless, some degree of ability, some measure of influence, some position in which you can do good to your fellows and these demand your dependence upon God! You cannot discharge your responsibilities as relatives, as citizens, as neighbors, no, as Christian men and women, unless you often make supplication for all ranks and conditions.

To pray for others must become a habit to you from which you would not cease even if they provoked you to the utmost degree, for you would only cry out, “God forbid that I should cease to pray for you, for it would be a great sin in the sight of the Most High.”

II. Now, secondly, I call you to notice in Samuel’s case his provocation to cease from intercession, which provocation he patiently endured. The first provocation was the slight which they put upon him. The grand old man who had all the year round made his circuit from place to place to do justice had never looked at a bribe. He had done everything for them without fee or reward. Though he had a right to his stipend, yet he did not take it. In the generosity of his spirit, he did everything gratuitously like Nehemiah, in later days, who said, “The former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people and had taken of them bread and wine, beside 40 shekels of silver; yes, even their servants ruled over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God.”

Samuel, throughout a long life, had kept the land in peace and innumerable blessings had come to Israel through his leadership. But now he was getting old and somewhat infirm, though he was far from being worn out—but they seized on this excuse for setting up a king. The old man felt

that there was life and work in him yet, but they clamored for a king and therefore their aged friend must give up his office and come down from his high position. It displeases him when he first hears their demand, but after a little time spent in prayer he resigns his position very pleasantly and all his anxiety is to find the right man for the throne. When the man is found, he is full of care that the Lord's Anointed shall be guided aright in the kingdom and without a thought about himself he rejoices at the sight of one whose opening days promised so well.

His deposition was a hard thing, mark you—an unkind, ungenerous thing—but he did not pray one atom the less for the people because of it! He probably prayed much more, for as his mother prayed most when the sorrow of her heart was greatest, so was it with Samuel. Beyond the provocation which came from slight upon himself, he felt wounded by their utter rejection of his solemn protest. He stood before them and reasoned with them in the clearest possible manner—"What do you want a king for?" he seemed to say. "This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you. He will take your sons and appoint them for himself, for his chariots and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. He will take your daughters to be confectionaries and to be cooks and to be bakers and he will take your fields and your vineyards and your olive yards, even the best of them and give them to his servants.

"He will take the tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants and he will take your menservants and your maidservants and your best young men and your asses and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep and you shall be his servants and you shall cry out in that day because of your king which you shall have chosen; and the Lord will not hear you in that day." There was sound common sense in all this and every word turned out to be true, in fact, before long—and yet they would not listen. They said, "No, but we will have a king over us; that we, also, may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us and fight our battles."

Despite their rejection of his warning, the venerable man did not grow testy. It is sometimes the infirmity of wise men of years and weight, that when they have presented a clearer case—presented it earnestly in all simplicity of heart and the thing looks as plain as that twice two make four—then if their hearers deliberately persist in defying their warning they grow peevish, or perhaps it is more fair to say they exhibit a justifiable indignation. Samuel is always hopeful and if they will not do the best thing possible, he will try to lead them to do the second best. If they will not abide under the direct rule of the Lord, as their King, he hopes that they will do well under a human king who shall be a viceroy under God

and so he continues hopefully to pray for them and to make the best he can of them.

At last it came to this, that the nation must have a king and their king must be crowned. They must go to Gilgal to settle the kingdom and then Samuel stood up and in the words which I read to you just now he declared how he had dealt with them—how he had never defrauded nor oppressed, nor taken anything from them—and he told them that their choice of a king was, to some extent, a rejection of God. He told them that they were putting aside the best of rules and the most honorable of governments to go down to the level of the nations. Still, they rejected his last appeal and it is beautiful, to my mind, to see how calmly he drops the question when he has given his last address and made his most solemn appeal to Heaven. Their obstinate adherence to their whim did not cause him to restrain prayer on their behalf.

The practical lesson of this is that when you are tempted to cease from pleading for certain persons, you must not yield to the suggestion. They have ridiculed your prayers—they tell you that they do not need them—they have even made a taunt and a jest of your pious wishes on their behalf. Never mind! Retaliate by still greater love! Do not cease to wrestle with God for them. It may be you have been very much disappointed in them. Your heart breaks to see how they have gone aside, yet go with your deep anxieties to the Mercy Seat and cry out, again, for them! What will become of them if you leave them to themselves? Do not leave off interceding, though you are provoked to do so in 10,000 ways! It may be that you think, partly in unbelief and partly through trembling anxiety, that their doom is sealed and they will go on to Perdition. Let this rather *increase* the intensity of your prayer than in the least degree diminish it.

Till sinners are in Hell cry to God for them! As long as there is breath in *their* bodies and *your* body, cause the voice of your supplication to be heard. Your husband, good Woman, what if he grows more drunken and more profane? Still pray for him! God, who can draw out leviathan as with a hook, can yet take this great sinner and make a saint of him! What if your son seems to be more profligate than ever? Follow him with many entreaties and weep before God about him, still. Loving Mother and gracious Father, join your fervent cries day and night at the Mercy Seat and you shall yet obtain your desire!

III. I come, in the third place, briefly to notice Samuel in his persevering intercession. Though the people provoked him, he did not cease from prayer for them, for, first, then and there, he offered fresh supplication for them and that cry was heard and Saul was dowried with a rich measure of favor to start with. Samuel did not cease his prayer for Saul when Saul had gone far astray, for we find this passage—“Then came the word of the

Lord to Samuel, saying, It repents Me that I have set up Saul to be king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not performed My commandment. And it grieved Samuel and he cried unto the Lord all night.”

All night! I think I see the old man in agony for Saul, whom he loved. Old men need sleep, but the Prophet forsook his bed and, in the night watches, poured out his soul unto the Lord. Though he received no cheering answer, he still continued to cry, for we read, a little further on, that the Lord said to him, “How long will you mourn for Saul?” He was pushing the case as far as ever he could push it, till the Lord gave him warning that there was no use in it. “How long will you mourn for Saul?” It is to be admired in Samuel, that even though Saul may have committed the sin which is unto death and Samuel had some fear that his fate was fixed, yet he prayed on in desperate hope.

The Apostle John puts the case thus—“If any man sees his Brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.” He does not, in such a case, *forbid* our prayers, neither does he encourage them, but I take it that he gives us a permit to pray on. We do not know for certain that the most guilty person has, indeed, passed the bounds of mercy and, therefore, we may intercede with hope. If we have a horrible dread upon us that possibly our erring relative is beyond hope, if we are not *commanded* to pray, we are certainly *not forbidden* and it is always best to err on the safe side, if it is erring at all. We may still go to God, even with a forlorn hope and cry to Him in the extremity of our distress.

We are not likely to hear the Lord say to us, “How long will you mourn for Saul?” We are not likely to hear Him say, “How long will you pray for your boy? How long will you mourn over your husband? I do not intend to save them.” When the Prophet knew that Saul was hopelessly rejected, he did not cease to pray for the nation, but went down to Bethlehem and anointed David. And when David was pursued by the malice of Saul, we find him harboring David at Ramah and exhibiting the power of prayer in his own house and in the holy place. For when Saul came down thinking to seize David, even in the Seer’s house, there was a Prayer Meeting being held and Saul was so struck with it that he took to prophesying, himself, and lay down all night among them disrobed and humbled.

Men exclaimed, “Is Saul also among the Prophets?” The malicious king could not venture to *touch* Samuel! The Prophet was a gentle, mild, loving man and yet the black-hearted Saul always had an awe of him, so that he took hold of his garment for protection and after Samuel was dead, wickedly sought for his supposed spirit for guidance. The man of God had evidently impressed the tall reprobate with the weight of his holy character.

It is written that God was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground—and this was because he was a praying man. He who can prevail with God for man can always prevail with man for God! If you can overcome Heaven by prayer, you can overcome earth by preaching! If you know the art of speaking to the Eternal, it will be a small thing to speak to mortal men!

Rest assured that the very essence of all true power over men for their good must lie in power with God in secret—when we have waited upon the Lord and prevailed, our work is well-near done. I pray you, therefore, still persevere in supplication and be supported in your perseverance by the knowledge that it would be a *sin* to cease to pray for those who have been the subjects of your petitions! Samuel confesses that it would have been sinful on his part to abstain from intercession. How so? Why, if he ceased to pray for that people, he would be neglecting his *office*, for God had made him a Prophet to the nation and he must intercede for them or neglect his duty! It would show a lack of love to the Lord's chosen people if he did not pray for them!

How could he teach them if he were not, himself taught of God? How could he possibly hope to sway them if he had not enough affection for them to cry to God on their behalf? It would be, in his case, too, a sin of anger. It would look as if he were in a spat with them and with God, too, because he could not be all that he would wish to be. "God forbid," he said, "I should harbor such anger in my bosom as to cease to pray for you." It would have been a neglect of the Divine Glory, for whatever the people might be, God's name was wrapped up in them and if they did not prosper, the Lord would not be glorified in the eyes of the heathen. He could not give up praying for them, for their cause was the cause of God! It would have been a cruelty to souls if he who possessed such power in prayer had restrained it.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, it will be sin on your part if you neglect the Mercy Seat. You will grieve the Holy Spirit, you will rob Christ of His Glory, you will be cruel to souls dead in sin and you will be false and traitorous to the Spirit of Grace and to your sacred calling.

IV. Our last point is that Samuel showed his sincerity in intercession by corresponding action, for he says in the words of the text, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way." So far from leaving off praying, he would be doubly diligent to teach them and he did so. He taught them by reminding them of God's promises, that He would not forsake His people and by directing them how to act—"Serve God in truth with all you heart." He urged good motives upon them—"Consider the great things He

has done for you”—and he added a solemn warning, “If you shall still do wickedly, you shall be consumed, both you and your king.”

After praying for your friends, try, as well as you can, to answer your own prayer by using the means which God ordinarily blesses. Some persons make idle prayers, for they use no effort for obtaining their requests. If a farmer asks for a harvest, he also plows and sows, or else his supplications would be hypocritical! If we wish to see our neighbors converted, we shall labor for it in all ways. We should invite them to go with us where the Gospel is faithfully preached, or place a good book in their way, or speak with them, personally, about eternal things. If I knew where gold was to be had for the picking up and I wanted my neighbor to be rich, I would tell him of the precious deposit and ask him to come and gather some of the treasure with me.

But many never think of inviting a neighbor or a friend who is a Sabbath-breaker to go with them to the house of God—and there are thousands in London who only need an *invitation* and they would be sure to come, once, at any rate—and who can tell but that *once* might lead to their conversion? If I desire the salvation of anyone, I ought to tell him, as best as I can, what his condition is and what the way of salvation is and how he may find rest. All men are approachable at some time or in some way. It is very imprudent to rush at everybody as soon as you see them, without thought or ordinary prudence, for you may disgust those whom you wish to win. Those who earnestly plead for others and bestir themselves to seek them, are generally taught of God and so they are made wise as to time, manner and subject.

A man who wishes to shoot birds will, after a while, become expert in the sport, because he will give his mind to it. He will, after a little practice, become a noted marksman and know all about guns and dogs. A man who wants to catch salmon has his heart set upon his angling and becomes absorbed in the pursuit. He soon learns how to use his rod and how to manage his fish. So he who longs to win souls and puts his heart into it, finds out the knack of it by some means and the Lord gives him success. I could not teach it to you—you must practice in order to find out—but this I will say, no man is clear of his fellows’ blood simply because he has prayed to be so. Supposed we had around this parish of Newington a number of people who were dying of hunger and we were to have a Prayer Meeting that God would relieve their need—would it not be *hypocrisy* worthy to be ridiculed and held up to reprobation if, after having prayed for these people, we all went home and ate our own dinners and did not give them a farthing’s worth of bread?

The truly benevolent man puts his hand in his pocket and says, “What can I do that my prayer may be answered?” I have heard of one who

prayed in New York for a certain number of very poor families that he had visited and he asked the Lord that they might be fed and clothed. His little sons said, "Father, if I were God I should tell you to answer your own prayer, for you have plenty of money." Thus the Lord might well say to us when we have been interceding, "Go and answer your own prayer by telling your friends of My Son." Do you sing, "Fly abroad, you mighty Gospel"? Then give it wings covered with silver!

Do you sing, "Waft, waft, you winds, His story"? Then spend your breath for it! There is a power in your gifts! There is a power in your speech! Use these powers. If you cannot personally do much, you can do a great deal by helping another to preach Christ. But chief and first you ought to do something by your own hand, heart and tongue. Go and teach the good and right way and then shall your prayers be heard!

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OBEDIENCE BETTER THAN SACRIFICE

NO. 686

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

***“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to
hearken than the fat of rams.”
1 Samuel 15:22.***

SAUL had been commanded to utterly slay all the Amalekites and their cattle. Instead of doing so he preserved the king and suffered his people to take the best of the oxen and of the sheep. When called to account for this he declared that he did it with a view of offering sacrifice to God—but Samuel met him at once with the assurance that such sacrifices were no excuse for an act of direct rebellion. In so doing he altered his sentence, which is worthy to be printed in letters of gold and to be hung up before the eyes of the present generation: “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

I think that in this verse—and here I shall dwell mainly—there is, first, a voice to professing Christians, and then, secondly, to unconverted persons.

I. First, I will speak to you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, you who have made a PROFESSION of your faith in Him. Be it ever in your remembrance, that to obey, to keep strictly in the path of your Savior’s command, is better than any outward form of religion. And to hearken to His precepts with an attentive ear is better than to bring the fat of rams or anything else which you may wish to lay upon His altar. Probably there are some of you here tonight who may be living in the neglect of some known duty. It is no new thing for Christians to know their duty—to have their conscience enlightened about it—and yet to neglect it.

If you are failing to keep the least of one of Christ’s commands to His disciples, I pray you, Brethren, be disobedient no longer. I know, for instance, that some of you can see it to be your duty, as Believers, to be baptized. If you did not think it to be your duty, I would not bring this text to bear upon you. But if you feel it is right, and you do it not, let me say to you that all the pretensions you make of attachment to your Master and all the other actions which you may perform, are as nothing compared with the neglect of this! “To obey,” even in the slightest and smallest thing, “is better than sacrifice,” and to hearken diligently to the Lord’s commands is better than the fat of rams.

It may be that some of you, though you are professed Christians, are living in the prosecution of some evil trade, and your conscience has often said, “Get out of it.” You are not in the position that a Christian ought to

be in—but then you hope that you will be able to make a little money—and you will retire and do a world of good with it. Ah, God cares nothing for this rams' fat of yours! He asks not for these sacrifices which you intend to make. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Perhaps you are in connection with a Christian church in which you may see much that is wrong and you know that you ought not to tolerate it, but still you do so. You say, "I have a position of usefulness, and if I come out I shall not be so useful as I am now." My Brother, your usefulness is but as the fat of rams, and "to obey is better than" it all. The right way for a Christian to walk in is to do what his Master bids him, leaving all consequences to the Almighty. You have nothing to do with your own usefulness further than to keep your Master's commands at all hazards and under all risks. "I counsel you to keep the King's commandments," and, "whatever He said unto you, do it." Sit at His feet with Mary and learn of Him! And when you rise up from that reverent posture, let it be with the prayer—

***"Help me to run in Your commands,
'Tis a delightful road.
Nor let my head, nor heart, nor hands,
Offend against my God."***

Possibly, too, dear Brother, there may be some evil habit in which you are indulging and which you excuse by the reflection, "Well, I am always at the Prayer Meeting. I am constantly at communion, and I give so much of my substance to the support of the Lord's work." I am glad that you do these things, but oh, I pray you give up that sin! I pray you cut it to pieces and cast it away, for if you do not, all your show of sacrifice will be but an abomination! The first thing which God requires of you as His beloved is obedience! And though you should preach with the tongue of men and of angels, though you should give your body to be burned and your goods to feed the poor, yet if you do not hearken to your Lord and are not obedient to His will, all besides shall profit you nothing.

It is a blessed thing to be teachable as a little child, and to be willing to be taught of God. But it is a much more blessed thing, still, when one has been taught to go at once and carry out the lesson which the Master has whispered in his ear. How many excellent Christians there are who sacrifice a goodly flock of sheep so as to replenish the altar of our God who, nevertheless, are faulty because they obey not the Word of the Lord? Look at our Missionary Society's list of subscribers, and ask yourself the question, "Do all these help the spread of the Gospel by obedience to the precept, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature"?"

There you see in the money gift the sacrifice, but better far to have *obedience*. Both ought to be joined together. But of the two, better is the act of *obedience* than of giving! Noah's sacrifice sent up a sweet savor before God, but in God's sight the obedience which led him to build the ark and enter in with his family was far more precious—and for this his name is written among the champions of faith and handed down to us as a word of

honor and renown. Moreover, Brethren, to obey is better than sacrifice in the matter of caring for the sick and needy of all classes. We rejoice in the number of hospitals which adorn our cities. These are the princely trophies of the power of our holy religion.

To these we triumphantly point as among the ripe fruits of that Christianity which is for the healing of the nations, chiefly in a spiritual, but also in the *physical* aspect of man's diseased and miserable state. There are no nobler words in our language than those inscribed on so many walls—"Supported by voluntary contributions." We glory in them! Rome's monuments, Grecian trophies, Egyptian's mighty tombs and Assyria's huge monoliths are dwarfed into petty exhibitions of human pride and vanity before the sublime majesty of these exhibitions of a God-given love to our fellow men!

But all these homes of mercy and healing become evils to ourselves, though they are blessings to the distressed, if we contribute of our wealth to their financial support and neglect personally to *visit* the fatherless and widows in their affliction, to feed the hungry, to care for the sick, and do not, like the Master, go about doing good. Give as God has given to you, but remember God *acts* as well as gives. "Go you and do likewise." Sacrifice, but also obey! A cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple, and in obedience to the Lord, is a golden deed valued by our heavenly Master above all price—more precious in His sight than silver—yes, than much fine gold.

I put this very earnestly to the members of this church, and, indeed, to all of you who hope that you are followers of Christ: Is there anything that you are neglecting? Is there any sin in which you are indulging? Is there any voice of conscience to which you have turned a deaf ear? Is there one passage of Scripture which you dare not look in the face because you are living in neglect of it? Then let Samuel's voice come to you and set you seeking for more Divine Grace, for "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

II. But my main business tonight is with the UNCONVERTED—and may the Master give us Grace to deal with them affectionately, faithfully, and earnestly! My Hearer, in the first place, God has given to you in the Gospel dispensation a *command*. It is a command in the obeying of which there is eternal life, and the neglect of which will be and must be your everlasting ruin! That command is this: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

The Gospel does not come to you as the Law does, and say, "Do this and you shall live." It speaks as in the language of Isaiah the Prophet, and says, "Hearken diligently unto Me. Hear, and your souls shall live." It tells you that whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God, and it bids the heralds of the Cross go out and cry, "He that believe and is baptized shall be saved. He that believe not shall be damned."

To use the expressive language of the beloved Apostle John, "This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." To believe is to *trust*—to trust with your whole heart—and who-

ever trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ with his whole heart has the promise of eternal life. No, if that act is sincere, it is the *result* of eternal life already *given!* God, the just One, must punish sin, therefore He must punish *you*—but Jesus Christ became Man and stood and smarted in the sinner's place—that whoever trusts in Him might neither smart nor suffer because God punished Christ in the place of every man who comes to Christ and rests upon Him. To trust in Jesus, therefore, is God's first and great commandment of salvation.

Now, listen, Sinner! God *commands* you to keep this and surely He has a right to do so. If He wills to save, He has a sovereign right to choose His own way of saving! If a man gives to the poor he may do so as he wills, whether he gives at this door or at that, or through the window—and so God is pleased to use the door of simple faith as the only door through which to bestow mercy on the sons of men. And not only has He a right to choose this way, but it is the *only* way that would suit *you!* If God determined to save none but those who kept His Law, what would become of you? If He only gave Divine Grace to the holy and to the good, where would *you* be?

But the way of faith suits, and readily suits, one who has broken God's commandments. Though a sinner is dying, though he may be on the cross like the dying thief, yet, as the way of salvation is but a *looking* at Christ, there is hope for him even in the last extremity that he may still be able to look and live! Why should you kick against God's way when it is the best to suit you—when none can be more suitable—none more simple? He has chosen it because it is a way which honors His dear Son.

Your trusting Jesus gives glory to Jesus and therefore God delights in your faith. And, besides, it brings a blessing to your own soul. To trust in Christ is in itself a blessing. It is humbling, but it is comforting. It empties you, but it fills you. It strips you, but it clothes you. Faith has a double action like a two-edged sword. It kills pride but at the same time it heals the wound it gave by giving to the sinner trust in Jesus. To trust Jesus is the best conceivable way I can imagine by which a sinner can be reconciled unto God through the blood of the great Redeemer. I pray you, therefore, be not angry because God is gracious. Be not rebellious when the still small voice says, "Look, Sinner, look to Him who died upon the tree, and by that look you shall live."

Now, this first point being clear, that God has given a *command*, the second remark is that the most of men, instead of obeying God, want to bring him sacrifices. They suppose that their *own* way of salvation is much better than any that the Almighty can have devised and therefore they offer their fat of rams. This takes different forms, but it is always the same principle. One man says, "Well now, I will give up my pleasures. You shall not see me at the ballroom. You shall not catch me at the theater. I will forsake the music hall. You shall not discover me in low company. I will give up all the things that my heart calls good—will not that save me?"

No, it will not. When you have made all this sacrifice all I shall, or can say of it is, “To *obey* is *better* than sacrifice.” “Well, but suppose I begin to attend a place of worship? Suppose I go very regularly, and as often as the doors are open? Suppose I go to early matins, and to the evening song? Suppose I attend every day in the week where the bell is always going? Suppose I come to the sacrament and am baptized? Supposing I go through with the thing, and give myself thoroughly up to all outward observances—will not all this save me?” No, nor will it even help you to being saved! These things will no more save you than husks will fill your hungry belly. It is not the husks you need, you need the kernels, and so, poor Soul, you do not need external ceremonies—you need the inward substance and you will never get that except by trusting Jesus Christ!

There was a time when *doctrine* was far more highly valued than is now the case with some Christians. You will often meet with those who seem to value men by their contributions to Church funds rather than by their soundness in the faith. Now, if I am to judge men at all, I prize the man who hearkens to God’s voice far more than the one who can bring the “fat of rams” to the altar of God’s House. A rich heretic I would reject and put from me, while the poor but obedient God-fearing disciple I would welcome with all my heart. An ear ever open to listen to God’s voice, a heart ever soft to receive the impress of God’s teaching—these are far more precious than a handful of silver and gold, and a mouth promising large things. For “to hearken is better than the fat of rams.”

All the costly gifts cast into the treasury are valuable chiefly as representing an inner spirit of devotion and of self-consecration. They may exist as outward acts without the living spirit which gives them value in God’s eyes. We need, therefore, to cultivate the *soul*—and to see that that sacred spirit of devout submission dwells within us which dwelt in Him—who not only sacrificed Himself on the Cross, being obedient unto death, but ever lived in that state of heart which was embodied in His prayer, “Nevertheless, not My will but Yours be done.”

Would the washing of the windows of a house make the *inhabitants* clean? Does the painting and ornamenting of the exterior of a mansion make the dwellers *in it* healthier or holier men? We read of devils entering into a clean swept and garnished house, and the last end of that man was worse than the first! All the outward cleansing is but the gilding of the bars of the cage full of unclean birds—the whitewashing of sepulchers full of rottenness and dead men’s bones. Washing the outside of a box will leave all the clothes inside as foul as ever. Remember, therefore, that all that you can do in the way of outward religion is nothing but the sacrifice of the fat of rams—and “to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

“Yes,” says another, “but suppose I punish myself a good deal for all that I have done? I will abstain from this. I will deny myself that. I will mortify myself in this passion. I will give up that evil.” Friend, if you have any evil give it up, but when you have done so do not rely upon that, for this you *ought* to have done, and not to have left the other undone! God’s

command is, "Believe," and if you should go about to sacrifice your lusts till they are bleeding like a hecatomb of bullocks upon the altar, yet I must say to you, as Samuel sternly said to Saul, "To obey is better than to sacrifice, and to hearken to the Gospel message is better than all this fat of rams."

But it is thought by some if they should add to all this a good deal of generosity, surely they will be saved. "Suppose I give money to the poor, build a lot of alms-houses and help to build a church? Suppose I am generous even beyond my means, will not this help me?" Sinner, why do you ask such a question? God has set before you a door—an open door—and over it is written, "Believe and live"! And yet you go about and wander abroad to find another door! What is all your gold worth, Man? Why, Heaven is paved with it! All the gold you have would not buy a single slab of the eternal pavement, and do you think to enter there by way of your poor giving?

If God were hungry He would not tell you, for His are the cattle on a thousand hills, and His are the mines of silver, and the sparkling ores of gold. The diamond, and the topaz, and the chrysolite are all His own, and His eyes see them hidden in their secret veins and lodes! Do you think to bribe the Eternal with your paltry purse? Oh, do you understand that "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams"?

"Yes, but," says the sinner, "if I could add to all this a great deal of confidence in those good men who are recognized by the world as priests? Suppose I put myself into their bonds? I would not go to the Roman Catholics, for I do not like them much, but supposing I go to the Episcopalians—they have priests, too, and sprinkle children with holy water, and bury the reprobate dead, in 'sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection to everlasting life'—could not they do something for me? Or suppose I go to some Dissenting minister, and put myself under his care, cannot he help me?"

No, Sir, there is nothing in us that can help you one jot. We hate the very thought of being priests! I would sooner be a devil than be a priest with the exception of being what all Christians are—priests unto God. Let me justify that strong remark—of all pretensions on earth there is none so detestable as the pretense of being able to bestow Divine Grace upon men and of standing between their souls and God! Beloved, we are your servants for Christ's sake, but as for any priestly authority to give Grace to you, we shake off the imputation as Paul shook off the viper from his hand into the fire.

We speak to men of our own kith and kin, we talk to you out of warm earnest hearts, but we can only say to you, "Do not trust in *us*, for you will be fools if you do. Do not trust in *any* man, for though you might make a sacrifice of your reason by so doing, yet remember that 'to obey is better than sacrifice.' " God demands of you not submission to your fellow men, whoever they may be—He requires of you not to listen to the pealing of organs, not to attend gorgeous ceremonies where the smoke of incense goes up in gaudy palaces dedicated to His service. He requires this—that

you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then He tells you that you shall live. Trust the Savior and you shall not perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hand! But if you refuse this way of salvation, then there is none other presented to you and you must perish in your sins. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

And now I have to show that it is so. Men are always setting up these ways of salvation of their own, and they will run anywhere sooner than come to Christ and do as God tells them! Let me show how to obey is better than sacrifice, and how to hearken is better than the fat of rams. It is better in *itself*. It shows that you are more humble. There are persons in the world who say that to trust Christ to save us from sin is not to be humble. Now, is it not always humility on the part of a child to do exactly what its parent tells it without asking any questions? I think it is so.

Some poor Papists go down on their knees and even lick the dust to do penance, and they think that this is being humble! Now, suppose one of your children has offended you, and you say to him, "Come, my Dear, I freely forgive you. Come and give me a kiss, and it is all over." He shakes his head, and says, "No, Father, I cannot kiss you." And he runs upstairs and shuts himself up. You knock at the door, and say, "Come, my Child, come and kiss me, and it is all forgiven." But he shakes his head and says, "No, never!" He shuts himself up there all alone, and he thinks he is doing more to put away your anger by so doing than by obeying your command!

You say to him solemnly, "My Child, I will chasten you again for disobedience if you do not come and accept the forgiveness which I offer to you if you will but kiss me." The child sullenly says, "No, Father, I will do something else that is more humbling." And then you feel in your soul that that is an unhumiliated child or else he would at once do what his father told him—without thinking whether it would be a humiliating thing or not! It would be a humbling thing because his father told him to do it, and if he were a right-minded child he would do it from a spirit of obedience.

Now, you may think it very humble on your part to need to feel a great deal of conviction and to shed a great many tears, and to pray a great many prayers—but the most lowly thing you can do is to perform what the Master tells you. "Trust Me," He said, "do not go over there to weep—come to Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Do not stand at the swine's trough saying, "I will not arise and go to my Father, for I am not fit to go till I have suffered a great deal more." Hear the voice which bids you say, "I will arise and go unto my Father. And what I have to say I will say unto him. And if I have to weep I will weep with my head in his bosom, while I receive the kisses of his love."

Come, poor Sinner, do not set up your proud humility in the teeth of God, but since He bids you look and live, oh, give up your prayers and even your tears, and your repenting, and your convictions—have done with them all as grounds of confidence—and look to Jesus Christ, and to Jesus Christ alone!

But in the next place, it is really a more *holy* thing. There are some soldiers here tonight. Now suppose one of these received orders from the commanding officer to keep guard at such-and-such a door. All of a sudden he thinks to himself, "I am very fond of our commander and I should like to do something for him." He puts his musket against the wall and starts out to find a shop where he can buy a bunch of flowers. He is away from his post all the while, of course, and when he comes back he is discovered to have been away from the post of duty.

He says, "Here is the bunch of flowers I went to get." But I hear his officer say, "To obey is better than that—we cannot allow you—military discipline would not permit it—to run off at every whim and wish of yours and neglect your duty, for who knows what mischief might ensue?" The man, however much you might admire what he was doing, would certainly be made to learn by military law that "To obey is better than sacrifice." It is a holier and a better thing to do one's duty than to make duties for one's self and then set about them.

Now, does it not seem a very pretty thing when a man puts on a very handsome-looking gown with a yellow cross down his back, and something else in pink, and I know not what colors, and ministers in a place decorated with flowers? And where there are such sweet things—incense smoking from silver censers and choristers all in white—is not that man serving God? When he preaches he does not say to the people, "Believe and live," but begins to talk about "the blessed sacrament of the altar," or some other such stuff? Is he not serving God when he does this? I will appeal to this old Book.

Where inside these leaves and covers is there a word about burning this smoking incense? When did Christ ever say anything about it? Where have we anything about that decorated font, or about that pulpit that looks so very glorious? Why, the man has been making up a spiritual pantomime for himself and he has left out altogether the soul of the matter. He has left out Christ! Therefore he has NOT done his work! He has done twenty other things—I dare say very sincerely and with a very pure desire—but after all he needs to be made to learn the meaning of this passage, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

And better than smoking incense, and flowers, and gilded crosses, and chasubles, and albs, and dalmatics, and all such things as could possibly be brought together, if he had God's Word for it, it would be right, but without God's Word it is a mere invention of man to which God can have no regard. It is a more holy thing to do what God bids you than to do what you yourselves invent. When I have done with what I have invented, however pretty it may be, however venerable it may seem, yet what does it come to? Suppose I worship God in one of those smart robes—is my worship a bit the better? Suppose I should go home tonight and spend the night on my knees and think that by that means I should satisfy God? What should I have done but made my knees ache?

Supposing I had filled this place with incense—what should I have done but probably have made you cough? Suppose I had decorated myself and this place—some of you might have been pleased—but what connection on earth can there be between flowers and holiness, or between gilding and millinery and glorifying God? If our God were like some of the fabled deities of Greece and Rome He might be delighted with these pretty things, but our God is in the heavens, and when He does show His splendor He scatters stars broadcast across the sky with both His hands—so what are all your prettinesses to Him? What is your swelling music and all your pretty things to Him who built the heavens and piled the earth with all its rugged splendor of forest, and mountain, and stream? “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

But while I remark upon these things, let me also say that to obey the precept, “Believe and live,” is certainly a great deal more effectual to the soul’s salvation than all the sacrifice and all the fat of rams which you can offer. Let me give you a picture by way of illustration. Naaman was a leper. He desired healing. The Prophet said to him, “Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and you shall be clean.” Now Naaman thought to himself, “I dare say, *wash*? Does he think me to be some filthy wretch who needs washing? He says I must wash seven times! Does he really think that I have not washed for so long that it will take seven washings to get me clean?

“He says I must wash! What a simple thing! I have washed every day, and it has done me no good. He says I must wash in Jordan! Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Jordan? Why cannot I wash in *them* and be clean?” This is just what some of you say about *believing*. You say, “Well, but *sacraments*—there must be *something* in them! Believing in Christ—why it is such a simple thing! I am such a respectable person. This is a very good religion to preach to thieves and so on, but surely you forget that I have a great many good works of my own—cannot I think of *them*? You say I must trust in Christ as though you thought nothing of my good works.”

Well, you are near the mark, Sir. I do *not* think anything of them! I would not give a penny for a wagon load of them! The whole of them are just what Paul calls them—“*refuse*.” He says, “I count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in Him.” All your best works are but so much rubbish to be carted out of the way, and if you trust in them they will be your ruin! All we say to you is, “BELIEVE AND LIVE.”

Now Naaman was in a great rage and he went away, but his servant said to him, “My Father, if the Prophet had bid you do some great thing would you not have done it? Much rather, then, will you not do what he tells you when he says, Wash and he clean?” Now, if my Master were to say to you tonight, “Walk to the city of York barefoot and you shall be saved,” if you believed it, the most of you would start off tonight! But when the message is, “*Believe* and live,” oh, that is too simple! What? Just trust Christ and be saved on the spot?! Why, it cannot be, you think! If we

bade you do some great thing you would do it, but you refuse to do so simple a thing as to *believe*.

But if Naaman had gone to Abana and Pharpar he would not have been healed. And if he had sought out all the physicians in Syria and paid away all his money, he would have been white with leprosy still. There was nothing but washing in Jordan that would heal him. And so with you, Sinner—you may go and do fifty thousand things but you will never get your sins forgiven! And you never, never shall have a hope of Heaven unless you will obey this one precept—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” But if you do this you shall find that “to obey is better than sacrifice” indeed, and “to hearken” than all “the fat of rams.”

But now we must close with a remark which we have made over and over again during this discourse, namely, that by *not* obeying and *not* hearkening to the Gospel, Sinner, you must *perish*. I know that some think it rather hard that there should be nothing for them but ruin if they will not believe in Jesus Christ. But if you will think for a minute you will see that it is just and reasonable. I suppose there is no way for a man to keep his strength up except by eating. If you were to say, “I shall never eat, I will not take refreshment,” you might go to Madeira, or travel to all the climates, (supposing you lived long enough!) but you would most certainly find that no climate and no exercise would avail to keep you alive if you refused to eat!

And would you then say, “Well, it is a hard thing that I should die because I refused to eat”? It is *not* an unjust thing that if you are such a fool as not to eat, you must die. It is precisely so with believing. “Believe, and you are saved.” If you will not believe, it is no hard thing that you should be damned! It would be harder if it were not to be the case! There is a man who is thirsty, and there stands before him a fountain. “No,” he says, “I will never touch a drop of moisture as long as I live. Cannot I get my thirst quenched in some other way?” We tell him, no, he must drink or die. He says, “I will never drink, but it is a hard thing that I must therefore die, a very hard thing.” No, it is not, poor Simpleton! It is nothing but an inevitable law of nature. You must drink or die. Why play the fool at such a cost as that? Drink, Man, drink! And so with Christ. There is the way of salvation—and you must trust Christ or perish—and there is nothing hard in it that you should perish if you do not.

Here is a man out at sea. He has a chart, and that chart, if well studied, will, with the help of the compass, guide him to his journey’s end. The polestar gleams out amidst the clouds, and that, too, will help him. “No,” he says, “I will have nothing to do with your stars. I do not believe in the North Pole. I shall not attend to that little thing inside the box. One needle is as good as another needle. I do not believe in your rubbish and I will have nothing to do with it. It is only a lot of nonsense got up by people on purpose to make money, and I will have nothing to do with it.” The man does not get to shore anywhere—he drifts about, but never reaches port—and he says it is a very hard thing, a very hard thing.

I do not think so. So some of you say, "Well, I am not going to read your Bible. I am not going to listen to your talk about Jesus Christ. I do not believe in such things." You will be damned, then, Sir! "That's very hard," you say. No, it is not! It is not more so than the fact that if you reject the compass and the polestar you will not get to your journey's end. There is no help for it—it must be so—you say you will have nothing to do with these things, and you pooh-pooh them. You will find it a very hard thing to laugh these matters down when you come to die, when the cold, clammy sweat must be wiped from your brow, and your heart beats against your ribs as if it wanted to get out and get away to God.

Oh Soul, you will find then that these Sundays, and these services, and this preaching, and this old Book are something more and better than you thought they were! And you will wonder that you were so simple as to neglect them, the only guides to salvation. And above all, that you neglected Christ, that Polestar which alone shines aloft to guide the mariner to the port of peace.

Now, where do you live tonight? You live, perhaps, on the other side of London Bridge, and you have to get over there tonight as you go home. But while you have been sitting here you have got a fancy into your head that you do not believe in bridges, and you do not believe in boats, and you do not believe in water. You say, "I am not going over any of your bridges! Do not tell me—I shall not get into any of your boats. If there is a river I am not going over it. I do not believe in crossing rivers." You go along and you come to the bridge, but you will not cross it. There is a boat, but you will not get into it. There is the river, and you say you will not cross that anyway, and yet you think it is very hard that you cannot get home.

Now I think you must have got something that has over-balanced your reasoning powers, for you would not think it so hard if you were in your senses. If a man will not do the thing that is necessary to a certain end, I do not see how he can expect to gain that end. You have taken poison and the physician brings an antidote, and says, "Take it quickly, or you will die. But if you take it quickly I will guarantee that the poison will be neutralized." But you say, "No, Doctor, I do not believe it. Let everything take its course—let every tub stand on its own bottom—I will have nothing to do with you, Doctor." "Well, sir, you will die, and when the coroner's inquest is held on your body, the verdict will be, 'Served him right!'"

So will it be with you if, having heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you say, "Oh, pooh-pooh! I am too much of a commonsense man to have anything to do with *that*, and I shall not attend to it." Then, when you perish, the verdict given by your conscience, which will sit upon the King's quest at last, will be a verdict of "Felode-se"—"he destroyed himself." So says the old Book—"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself!" But when I quote that text I must not stop there, for the next line is, "but in Me is your help found."

Oh, my dear Hearer, what a mercy it is that there is help in God! There is help in God for *you*! There is help in God for the *worst* of you! I cannot

tell who there may be here tonight. There may be some who have sinned very greatly, but there is help laid upon One who is “mighty to save.” Where are you, big Sinner? Here is a great Savior able to put all your sins away! Have you grown gray in wickedness? Ah, my Master can put away seventy years of sin by a moment’s application of His precious blood! See him bleeding on the Cross in agonies so great that angels might have wept to gaze upon Him?—

**“See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down?
Did ever such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?”**

There must be merit in such mighty agonies! If you trust in the merits of that precious blood you shall one day be with Him in Paradise. God give you Divine Grace to trust Jesus, to trust Jesus *now*, and then we shall meet again where they sing, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

**“Behold the Lamb of God!
Behold, believe and live!
Behold His all-atoning blood,
And life receive.
Look from yourself to Him,
Behold Him on the tree!
Though the eye of faith be dim
He looks on you.
That meek, that languid eye,
Turns from Himself away,
Invites the trembling sinner near,
And bids him stay.
Stay with Him near the tree.
Stay with Him near the tomb.
Stay till the risen Lord you see.
Stay ‘till He comes.”**

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WHO ARE THE ELECT?

NO. 638

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 9, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him, for this is he.”
1 Samuel 16:12.*

SAMUEL was sent to Bethlehem to discover the object of God's election. This would have been a very difficult task if the God who sent him had not accompanied him and spoken with the sure voice of Inspiration within him so soon as the chosen object stood before him. Brethren, it is neither your task nor mine to guess who are God's elect apart from marks and evidences. What was done in the councils of eternity before the world was made is hidden in the mind of God and we must not curiously intrude where the door is closed by the hand of Wisdom.

Yet in the preaching of the Word there is a discovery made of God's secret election. We preach the Gospel to every creature under Heaven. We deliver God's threats and promises to every sinner and we cry, “Look unto Jesus and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” That Gospel is, of itself, through God the Holy Spirit, the discerner of the chosen ones of God when they feel its quickening power and are raised from among the spiritually dead. The Gospel is a fan which, while it drives away the chaff, leaves the wheat upon the floor. The Gospel is like a refiner's fire and like the fuller's soap removing all that is extraneous and worthless, revealing the precious and the pure.

We ministers have no other way by which to discern the saints of God and to separate the precious from the vile but by faithfully preaching the Truth of God as it is in Jesus and observing its effects. As for ourselves, we may discover our own calling and election and make them sure. Paul said of the Thessalonians that he knew their election of God. We may discover the election of other men to a very high degree of probability by their conduct and conversation, and be certified of our own election, even to infallibility, by the witness of the Spirit within that we are born of God.

If our heart is renewed by the Spirit. If we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus. If we are reconciled unto God and redeemed from dead works we may know that our names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life from before the foundation of the world. This morning I am about to speak upon the way in which we may discover the elect, making the case of David, in some degree, our guiding star.

I. I would have you mark at the outset, THE SURPRISE of all, when they found that David, the least in his father's house, was the object of the Lord's choice as king over Israel! Observe that his brothers had no idea that David would be selected. Such a thought had never entered their minds. If the question had been asked of them, “Who among you will ever attain to the kingdom?” they would have selected any of the other seven, but they would certainly have passed by their brother, David.

He seems to have been thoroughly despised by his brothers. Eliab addresses him in a tone of scorn when he comes to the valley of Elah—“Because of your pride and the naughtiness of your heart you are come to see the battle.” This mode of speech was, no doubt, such as he usually employed towards the young man. I suppose that David had been one by himself. The sports of the seven were often such that he could not engage in them. He was no companion for them. If they at any time perpetrated any unjust or unrighteous deed—if, as probably a band of seven young men in the hey-day of youth were likely to do—they were bold in courses of sinful mirth—David would follow the example of Joseph and act as a reprover in their midst and consequently he fell under their contempt.

He was with his flock on the mountain side when they were making merry with their drinking. His book and his harp were his solace. Contemplation was his great delight and his God his best company—while his brothers found no pleasure in Divine things. He, like our Lord, could say, “For Your sake I have borne reproach. Shame has covered my face. I am become a stranger unto my brethren and an alien unto my mother’s children” (Psa. 69:7, 8). Like Joseph, he was “the dreamer” of the family in the esteem of the rest. They thought him moon-struck when he considered the heavens and called him mad when he meditated both day and night on God’s Law.

Now, beloved Friends to whom I address myself, you may be one of those whom God has looked upon with an eye of love from before the foundation of the world and yet, in the family to which you belong you may be overlooked and forgotten. Your own brethren have formed a very low opinion of your abilities and they have a perfect contempt for the singularity of your character. You are as a speckled bird among your own kinsfolk—you cannot enjoy what they enjoy—your loves and your longings run in a different channel from theirs. Suffer not their contempt to break your heart!

Remember David once stood in your position and there was yet another in the earlier days upon the crown of whose head the blessing of the eternal hills descended though he was separated from his brethren. And so may Heaven’s enriching smile yet rest on you for the Lord sees not as man sees! The rejected of men are often the beloved of the Lord. It is more painful to notice that David’s father should have had no idea of David’s excellence. A father has naturally more love to his child than a brother to his brother and frequently the youngest child is the darling.

But David does not seem to have been the tender one of his father. Jesse calls him the least and if I understand the word which he uses in the original, there is something more implied than his being the youngest. He was the least in the estimation of the ill-judging parent. It is strange that he should have been left out when the rest were summoned to the feast. I cannot acquit Jesse of fault in having omitted to call his son, when that feast was a special religious service. At a sacrifice *all* should be present. When the Prophet comes none should be away and yet it was not thought worthwhile to call David, although one would think a servant might have kept the sheep and so the whole family might have met on so hallowed an occasion.

Yet no son was left in the field but David. All the others were assembled. It sometimes happens, (but O how wrongly!), that one in the family

is overlooked, even by his parent in his hopes and prayers. The father seems to think, "God may be pleased to convert William. He may call Mary. I trust in His Providence we shall see John grow up to be a credit to us. But as for Richard or Sarah, I do not know what will ever become of them." How often will parents have to confess that they have misjudged and that the one upon whom they have set the black mark has been, after all, the joy and comfort of their lives and has given them more satisfaction than all the rest put together!

Are you such an one, young man? Are you painfully conscious that you have a narrow share in your parents' hearts? Be not downcast, distressed, or broken-hearted about this. You fare as David did before you and if he, the favored servant of God, the man after God's own heart, could put up with his position, be not you too proud to abide in it! Even if your father and your mother forsake you—if the Lord takes you up—He will be better to you than the best of parents! It is clear, also, that Samuel, God's servant, had at first no idea of David's election. The brethren advanced one by one and Samuel, using his human judgment, was ready to select any other rather than David.

The minister of God, if he is truly called and sent, has a yearning in his soul to bring out God's chosen from their hidden state. His eyes are quick to discern the first tokens of Divine Grace in a renewed soul. But sometimes the Christian minister is deceived. He consults with flesh and blood and selects Eliab, the one who is a fine person, whose noble countenance bespeaks something above the ordinary level, whose whole frame is so admirably fashioned that he is good to look upon. How true is it that the Lord takes not pleasure in the legs of a man. The gifts of personal appearance often become snares instead of blessings—"beauty is deceitful and favor is vain."

The Lord had not chosen Eliab. Then rank will come before the minister, and if he sees a person of high estate cheerfully listening to the Gospel, he is very ready to think, "Surely the Lord has chosen him." But how often these are but birds of passage in our congregation who never tarry long enough to build a nest in the sanctuary. Mere curiosity brings them and a new curiosity carries them elsewhere. Surely the Lord has not often chosen these Abinadabs.

Again, others are so well educated that when the Word is preached they appreciate the style in which it is delivered and the remarks which they make concerning it are so sensible and so judicious that the preacher is apt to say, "Surely the Lord has chosen these!" And yet how often the educated are too proud to believe the simplicities of Christ and the intellectual turn on their heels because the Gospel is scarcely refined enough for their taste.

At other times we feel sure that we have now pitched upon the right man, for we are charmed with our hearer's natural amiability of disposition and are cheered by his tenderness and susceptibility of mind to religious impressions. And yet we are disappointed. Many lovely blossoms never become fruit and hopeful saplings prove not to be plants of the Lord's right-hand planting and therefore are plucked up. At times, too, we hear such admirable conversation about religion that we conclude, "Now we have found out the chosen of the Lord." We have sat in company and

heard young men use devout expressions which implied no ordinary depth of Scriptural knowledge.

We have heard those persons pray and have admired their great gift in prayer. They have addressed religious assemblies and spoken with a high degree of fluency and our heart said, "Surely the Lord has chosen these!" And yet, my Brethren in the ministry will tell you that often out of the many hopefuls who have passed before them they have found many to be heart-breakers, and few who gave them any real satisfaction as to their conversion to God.

Meanwhile, the very ones whom we overlooked, the least ones in the assembly, have been the Davids upon whom God's blessing has fallen. Oh, some of you have listened to our word these ten years and more, and you have been impressed again and again—and yet you are unconverted! We often thought you must be the chosen of God when we marked your tears and your apparent feeling, but up till now you are without any evidence of election. On the other hand there has dropped into this place a drunkard and there has strayed into these aisles a harlot and the mighty Grace of God has converted them and they are rejoicing now in the full forgiveness of their sins while you are yet "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity"!

How true is that word, "the publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of Heaven before you." How matchless is the Sovereignty of God! "His ways are past finding out." The very poorest, the most illiterate, the mean and most obscure, the fools, the babes, the things despised—yes—"the things that are not" does He choose, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His Presence. It strikes me that there was one person more astonished when David was anointed than even his brothers, or his father, or the Prophet—and that was David!

He was a wonder unto many, but chiefly to himself. He had communed with God alone beneath the spreading trees. He had sung the praises of Jehovah in the wilderness where he had led his flocks, and by the water-side he had tuned his harp and made the rocks echo with the sweet music of his grateful soul. But he never dreamed of being a king! If a Prophet had said to him, "The Lord will take you from following the sheep to be ruler over His people Israel, and He will be with you wherever you go and cut off all your enemies out of your sight and make you a name like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth," he would have cried, "What am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that you have brought me up to now? Is this the manner of men, O Lord God?"

So, dear Friend, you may be truly a child of God, but you may, as yet, have no clear view of the high and noble calling to which God has ordained you. Your trembling faith has laid its hand upon the head of Jesus and you trust you are forgiven—but as yet you do not know the grandeur and dignity to which faith exalts every heir of Heaven. Now, let me whisper in your ear words concerning your present greatness and the glory which is yet to be revealed in you. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God. And it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is."

You are justified by faith and you have peace with God and do you not know that, "Whom He justifies, them He also glorifies"? You shall be surely glorified! Do you know the reason for this? It is because you are

“elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth.” Yes, poor Trembler, the thoughts of God were exercised concerning you before the stars began to dart their rays through the thick darkness! Jehovah-Jesus wrote your name upon His heart and engraved it on the palms of His hands before the skies were stretched abroad! Be of good courage, there is a kingdom for you!

The sure mercies of David have ordained you to overcome and to sit down upon Jesus’ Throne, even as He has overcome and is set down with His Father upon His Throne. Be glad, therefore, for it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. I think I see you all surprised and you say, “How can it be? I! Chosen of God! My many sins, my great infirmities, my doubts, my barrenness in God’s service—the coldness of my heart—all these make me go mourning. Can it be that yet He has ordained me to a kingdom?”

It is even so. Let your faith grasp the truth and go your way rejoicing. Remember, dear Friend, that it matters not what your occupation may be, you may yet have the privilege of the kingdom. David was but a shepherd and yet he was raised to the throne and so shall each Believer be. You may be obscure and unknown—in your father’s house the very least—and yet you may share a filial part in the Divine heart. You may be among those who never would be mentioned except as mere units of the general census—without parts, without position. You may almost think yourself to have less than the one talent—you may conceive yourself to be a worm and no man—and like David you may say, “I was as a beast before You.” And yet think of this—that the marvelous election of God can stoop from the highest Throne of Glory to lift the beggar from the dunghill and set him among princes!

II. We shall now turn our thoughts to THE TOKEN of election, the secret mark which the Lord sets in due time upon the chosen. In due time every chosen person receives the seal of Divine Grace. That stamp is a new heart and a right spirit! Let all men understand that a new heart is the private seal of the Divine One, the broad arrow of the King of Kings! Men look upon the outward appearance as the mark of favor, but God looks at the *heart* as the token of His choice.

We are not to suppose David was chosen to salvation because of the natural goodness of his heart, for he tells us, himself, that he was “born in sin and shaped in iniquity.” Although we are willing to grant that when God had renewed his heart as the result of His Sovereign Grace, a goodness of heart constituted a qualification for the kingdom just as Grace is a fitness for Glory—but the righteousness of heart was itself the *gift* of Sovereign Grace and was the *effect*—not the *cause* of the primary and eternal election which fixed on David. We do not intend to discuss the reason of God’s election—let us not be misunderstood—of that we know nothing!

We believe that God chooses wisely, but He chooses from reasons not known to men, probably reasons which could not be understood by us. All we know is, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” We are now speaking of the way by which God seals His elect and distinguishes His chosen ones *after* His Grace has operated upon them. They are distinguished by having a heart that differs from other men. May we be able thus to discover whether we are among them or not? What kind of heart had David? We may find it out by his Psalms. We cannot tell when some

of the Psalms were written, but if any of them were written in his youth, the twenty-third was certainly one.

That beautiful pastoral poem opens a window into the heart of David. Let us look through it and we shall soon perceive that he possessed a *believing* heart. How sweet is the sentence, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” Happy David! He had summed up all his wants and cares—he knew that he wanted pardon for sin and Divine Grace to preserve him from evil. He desired wisdom to guide him in the perilous paths of youth, strength to aid him in the conflicts which were before him—but instead of looking to himself or to friends, he turns away from all created good to God—and by faith he says, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.”

Here is a grand mark of Divine election! Dear friend, do you rest in God for everything? Has your heart given up all confidence in itself? “He that trusts in his own heart is a fool.” Has your heart given up all trust in your fellow? “Cursed is he that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm.” Have you seen the emptiness of your own works and willings and beings and wishes and have you taken the Lord as He reveals Himself in the pages of Scripture—Father, Son and Spirit—to be your All in All? If you do so trust, you need not fear your election, for when God looks into your heart He sees in your faith the symbol and sign of His Sovereign Grace! Never was there a simple faith in Himself where there had not been His hand at work and His heart ordaining to eternal life!

We note, as we read the Psalm, that David’s heart was also a meditative heart. Mark the words, “He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters.” He elsewhere writes—“My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” The whole book of Psalms, which is David’s life written out in poetic characters, proves that he was much given to meditation on heavenly subjects. Alone there on the mountains, down by the rippling brooks—wherever he had to conduct the flocks—there he set up an altar to his God and made an oratory for himself. Much sweet communion was carried on between David and his God which Eliab knew nothing of and into which Abinadab could not enter.

Read the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm and you will see that he won for himself all the blessings which by Inspiration he sang of in the first Psalm. He meditated upon the Law of his God both day and night. Dear Friend, is that your case? When your thoughts get free, do they fly away as the dove does to its dovecote—right away to God? Can you say with David that His Words are sweet to your taste? Is the very name of God dear to you? Do you delight yourself in Him? Do you meditate much upon the Person of Jesus Christ? Remember that by your thoughts you may judge your state and if your heart does not meditate on God’s statutes, you certainly miss one of the signs of Divine election—for elect souls are brought out in due time to find a delight in the ways and Words of God.

Go on with the Psalm and I think you will be struck with the humble heart which David had, for all the way through he does not praise himself. “*He* leads me beside the still waters, *He* restores my soul.” See, he has no crown for his own head! The crown is all for the Mighty One who is his Shepherd. His soul was in his pen when he wrote, “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be all the glory.” David was none of your strutting peacocks who cannot be content unless all eyes are upon them—he sang

God's praises as the nightingale will sing in the dark when no human ear is listening and no eye is admiring.

He was content to bloom unseen, knowing that the sweetness of a renewed heart is never wasted on the desert air. He was satisfied with God alone as his Auditor and he coveted not the high opinion of man. Before his God how high he rose and yet how low he bowed! How deeply did he feel his indebtedness to Him who gave him all, and how zealously did he ascribe his salvation and glory and strength unto Him who had been from the first to the last his Helper. He would have enjoyed the verse in which Asaph alludes to his low estate, "He chose David also His servant and took him from the sheepfolds: from following the ewes great with young He brought him to feed Jacob, His people, and Israel His inheritance."

O for a heart free from all pride! We should altogether fail in describing David if we were to omit other qualifications. His was a *holy* heart. Observe in the same Psalm, "He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." David delighted not in iniquity. The men of Belial he put far from him. "A liar shall not tarry in my sight," he said. He loved the people of God. He styles them, "The excellent of the earth in whom is all my delight." Holiness which becomes God's House was very delightful to David's soul. He loved the Commandments of God because of their holiness. "Your Word is very pure, therefore Your servant loves it" (Psa. 119:140).

I grant you that he did once fall into grievous sin, but that was an exception to a gracious rule. His rule was *holiness*. The best of men are men at the best and therefore they may slip. But oh, how bitterly David mourned to his dying day the evil into which he fell! "He was a man after God's own heart and his way was ordered according to holiness." Note what a brave heart beat in his breast! Where will you find a braver man than David? "Your servant slew both the lion and the bear and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them."

It is this David who, while the cringing host of Israel flies from combat, enters the battle with the boasting Philistine and brings deliverance unto Israel! Hear you the stripling's valorous voice—"You come against me with sword and with a spear and with a shield. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied." How bold was David in most cases!

There *were* times when he, like the children of Ephraim, turned his back in the day of battle. Take, for instance, when he played the fool before Achish. But in other cases his soul was set against the Lord's enemies and though an host encamped against him, his heart did not fear—though war was waged against him, in this was he confident—for he wore the breastplate of dauntless courage. The Psalm right bravely puts it, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me." Let me remind you that he had a very contented and grateful heart.

I do not know a better picture of David in his early days than that which Bunyan gives us of the shepherd who was singing in the Valley of Humiliation—

***"He that is down needs fear no fall.
I am content with what I have,
He that is low, no pride;***

Little be it or much;

***He that is humble ever shall.
And Lord, contentment still I crave,
Have God to be his guide.
Because you save such."***

Here is David's version of the very same sentiment, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies: You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over." He had all his heart could wish. I do trust, dear Friends, we can, some of us, humbly claim that we possess such a heart as this and oh, that my tongue may be able to say without deceit, "Yes, Lord, my soul is satisfied with what You ordain. Whatever Your will is, it shall be my will."

You should further observe the constancy of David's heart. He says, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever." He was not one of the Pliables, who set out and turn back again at the first slough into which they tumble. He was no Demas, ready to forsake his profession to win this present evil world. All the days of his life he abode close to the way of the Lord and remained as a servant in God's House. By such marks may we know our election.

I would God that those who are so positive of their election would condescend, sometimes, to try themselves by Scriptural marks and evidences. We are told, by certain Divines, that we should never doubt our safety. Beloved, we should never doubt *God*. But I am inclined to think that no man who exercises a holy watchfulness over himself and a holy earnestness to be found accepted at the last, can be at all times without doubts as to his own interest in Christ! I am persuaded that the hymn—

***"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought"***

is the experience of every child of God, more or less, and that there are seasons when that is the best hymn which a man can sing.

It is seldom that I doubt my interest in Christ Jesus, but it is very often that I ask myself, "Is this confidence well-grounded?" And if I were afraid to question myself, if I were afraid to go back to the foundation and search myself thoroughly—if I always went on blindly confident and never examined myself whether I were in the faith—I think that would be an omen of being given up to a strong delusion to believe a lie! I have labored in your presence to preach up the privilege of strong faith. I have urged you to strive after full assurance of faith—but never let these lips say a word or a syllable against that holy carefulness which makes a broad distinction between presumption and assurance!

Depend upon it—privilege preached always without precept will breed a fullness and lethargy in God's people! What we want at certain seasons is not a promise, but a telling, burning word of self-examination—the flavor of which we may not like—but which shall work in our souls spiritual good of a more lasting sort than sweet comforts would bring to us. Examine yourselves, dear Friends, then, by this.

I do not ask you whether your hearts are perfect—they are not! I do not ask you whether your hearts never go astray, for they are prone to wander. But I do ask you—Is your heart resting upon Jesus Christ? Is it a *believing* heart? Does your heart *meditate* upon Divine things? Does it find its best solace there? Is your heart a *humble* heart? Are you constrained to

ascribe all to Sovereign Grace? Is your heart a *holy* heart? Do you desire holiness? Do you find your pleasure in it? Is your heart *bold* for God? Does your heart ascribe praises to God? Is it a *grateful* heart? And is it a heart that is wholly fixed upon God, desiring never to go astray?

If it is, then you have marks of election. Search for these and add to all your searching this prayer, "Search me, O God and know my heart: try me and know my ways. And see if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting." Let me beseech you to pray God to pull your comforts into pieces if they are false comforts. I have conjured my God on bended knee full often to let me know the worst of my case. And if I am deluded, deceived, or deceiving, I do pray Him to tear the bandage from my eyes and take away every balm from my wounded heart except the balm of Gilead and never to let me rest till I am soundly grounded and bottomed on Christ Jesus and nowhere else but there!

Do make sure work in this case. If you must have "buts," and "ifs," and "perhaps"—have them about your estates and your property, but not about your *souls*. May the Holy Spirit help you to be often using the crucible to see whether your profession is true gold or not.

III. The third point is a very interesting one. It is MANIFESTATION, or the way in which the elect of God are made apparent to ourselves and others. We cannot see the hearts of our fellow men and therefore the heart can never be to us the way of distinguishing the elect of God—except so far as it is seen in acts and words.

Now the first sign by which this election was made known to David himself, and to a few others who probably did not know much about it, was by his being anointed. Samuel took a horn of oil and poured it on David. I do not think Jesse knew the full meaning of it. I feel sure that the seven brothers did not, for if they had, someone or other would have told Saul. Master Trapp says seven can only keep a secret when six of them know nothing about it. I am inclined to think that though they saw him anointed with oil they could not bring themselves to think that such a despised one as David was really anointed for the kingdom.

They saw the symbol, but probably did not understand the inward grace. But David did. David knew that he was now to be a king and though he never stretched out a hand or lifted a finger to get that throne for himself—though he often spared his enemy, Saul, when killing him might have brought him suddenly to the crown—yet he knew that he should one day reign over Israel. Beloved, there is a season when God anoints His people. They have believed, but there may elapse a little time between the believing and the conscious anointing.

But suddenly, when the Lord has illuminated their hearts to know and understand Divine things clearly, the Spirit of God comes with a sealing power upon them and from that day forward they rejoice to know that they have the indwelling of the Spirit and that they are set apart for God! I pray that some of you who have been lately converted may get your sealing from this day forward. If you shall receive it, you will be different men and women from what you were. Already saved by Grace, you will then begin to feel that force and power and vigor which renders the man of faith the master of the world!

If you are anointed you will feel the royal blood within your veins! As yet you do not know your kingship, but if the Spirit of God shall descend

upon you in plenteous measure, you will know your dignity and you will act like kings, reigning over inbred sins and seeking, as much as lies in you, to exercise the royal priesthood which the Master has conferred upon you. This inward sealing may be recognized among the saints—a few may be able to see in you the sealing—do not expect that many will, for it is only to *yourself* that it becomes the infallible witness that you are ONE OF God's elect.

The manifestation, however, went on in another way. After the anointing it appears that David became a man distinguished for the valor of his deeds. Saul's servant in recommending him says of him, that he was "a mighty valiant man and a man of war." Your election will be discovered by this—you will do what others cannot do. An elect soul, when the Spirit of God is upon him, can answer that question, "What do you do more than others?" Not proudly, but still calmly he can say—"There are many things which others do not and cannot do, which are easy to me through Christ who strengthens me." You will be able now, dear Friends, to break through the toils of custom—to wrestle with the lion of worldliness, to exhibit patience under suffering—to forgive your worst enemy without difficulty, to serve God in deeds of faith!

You will be able, in His strength, to be content to see your good name trod in the ditch if you may exalt Christ. Through the Holy Spirit you will do and dare where others are sluggishly cowards! You will dash forward to the conflict expecting the victory because God is with you—or you will be willing to suffer because the Lord has strengthened you to bear all things for His sake! Your election will be best known to your fellow men by your deeds of valor. It appears, too, that David was very prudent. The same witness-bearer said he was, "a man prudent in matters." Such will you be, when, as the elect of God the Spirit of Wisdom rests upon you.

You will not be in a hurry—you have nothing to gain! You will not be alarmed—you have nothing to lose! You have God and therefore you have all things! You cannot lose your God and therefore you can lose nothing. And being in no hurry you will have time to judge and weigh matters. "He that believes shall not make haste." Life will be with you no confused scramble. You will not be blundering out of one error, into another because you will take your matters before God in *prayer*. You will consult the oracle and your heart will be guided of the Lord. You will, if you live near to God, know when you come to a point of difficulty which way to turn. You will hear a voice which says, "This is the way, walk in it."

You will know, when you come to a difficulty where human wisdom is utterly worthless, how to fall flat on your face and wait until the strong arm comes to deliver you. You will be taught in the things of God and bold to teach others also and so, daily your election will be made known to your fellow men. Mark well that one of the ways by which your election will become clear and sure to all God's people will be this—if you are anointed king as David was before you, you will come into conflict with Saul! It cannot be possible that the chosen of God shall forever live in peace with the heirs of Hell.

He who put an enmity between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent takes care that that old enmity shall never die. The two first men of woman born were enemies of one another for this reason and until Christ shall come that same enmity will exist. Saul may like you for a little

time if you can play well upon an instrument and drive away his melancholy. But when Saul finds you out and discovers you to be the anointed king, he will hurl his javelin at you! The world is very satisfied with some ministers and with some Christians because they very much resemble itself—but as soon as the world finds out, “this is a man separate from us, of a different nature and of a different country”—it cannot but hate the man! It MUST do so!

Do you expect the world’s good word? Then go your way and flatter it and bow to it and cringe and be its servant and you shall have your reward in everlasting contempt! But are you willing to take your lot outside the camp with Jesus and to be recognized as being not of this world because He has chosen you out of the world? Then expect to receive hard measures! Expect to be misconstrued and misrepresented and to be despised! Your reward shall be when He comes and that reward shall outweigh all that you endure here below.

I think David was never more clearly manifested to be God’s elect than at the last when he was an outlaw. He never seems such a grand man as when he is among the tracks of the wild goats of Engedi. Never so great as when he is passing through the wilderness while Saul is hunting him, or standing at midnight over the sleeping form of his enemy and saying, “I will not touch him, for he is the Lord’s Anointed.” We do not read of many faults and slips and errors then! The outlawed David is most certainly manifested to all Israel to be the chosen of God because the chosen of man cannot abide him.

The happiest and best days, I believe, with the people of God are when they are most outlawed by men! When they are put out of the synagogue and when he that would kill them thinks that he did God a service. The brightest days for Christian piety were the days of martyrdom and persecution. Scotland has many saints, but she never has had such rich saints as those who lived in covenanting times! England has had many rich Divines who have taught the Word, but the Puritanical age was the golden age of England’s Christian literature! Depend upon it—you will find in your own life you may have many days of Heaven upon earth—but the place of persecution and rejection will be the spot where Jesus Christ manifests Himself most to you.

Are you resolved not to be conformed to this world? Are you willing to bear with Christ the brunt of the battle and like the living fish to swim against the stream? Are you ready to stand out like the other holy children in the days of Nebuchadnezzar and to say, like the Apostles in the days of the high priests, “Whether it is right to serve God or men, you judge”? Have you cast off the fear of man? Have you taken up the Cross to wear as your best and greatest ornament and treasure? If so, you are giving the very best evidence of having been chosen out of the world because you are not of the world.

Remember, to conclude, that after all conflicts were over, David was crowned. All Israel and all Judah sent to fetch David and they made him king! Amidst the blast of the horns and the homage and songs and joy of the people, David, the elected one, was publicly recognized. The crown was put upon his head. The imperial mantle graces his person! He signed the decrees and his word was law from Dan to Beersheba. The day comes when the like shall be true of the mean and the most despised of God’s

chosen! “Truly,” said the Apostle, “it does not yet appear”—we cannot see it, only faith can discern it, but it shall appear—it comes! The appearing draws near! Our head shall yet wear the crown for we shall reign with Christ Jesus!

I think even this earth which has despised us, shall yet know us as kings when we shall reign with Him. We shall yet put on the imperial purple. From the river, even to the ends of the earth, the saints shall possess the kingdom. And when Jesus comes to judge the people, we shall judge angels, sitting as assessors with Him, giving our verdict and adding our “Amens” to all His sentences. No, even in Heaven itself, angels shall be our servitors. They shall be ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation and we shall sit upon thrones. Oh, Christian, you know not the pomp which shall yet surround you! You have had some glimmering thought of the Savior’s Glory and the Savior’s dignity, but have you not forgotten that all this is *yours*?

Remember, we shall be like He when we shall see Him as He is. “Father, I will that they whom You have given Me be with Me where I am.” The same place for *you* as for the Savior! And you shall behold His Glory and you shall be partakers of it! Why, then, should you fear? Why should you be downcast and dismayed by reason of the trials on the way? Come! Pluck up courage! An hour with your God will make up for it all. One glimpse of Him and what will persecution seem? You have been called ugly names. Ill words have been pelted at you—but what will they be when you shall hear Him say, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world”?

There! The world’s thunder is gone like a whisper amidst the more glorious roll of angelic acclamations and the hiss of enmity is all forgotten amidst the kiss of love which the Savior gives to all His faithful ones. Cheered by the reward, I pray you press forward! Greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt shall you have who can renounce all for Christ’s sake! “Be you faithful unto death and He will give you a crown of life.” God grant that we may all be found numbered among the elect of Divine Grace and none of us be cast away and His shall be the praise forever and ever. Amen.

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THE LION-SLAYER—THE GIANT-KILLER

NO. 1253

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 5, 1875,
 BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Your servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, the Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.”
1 Samuel:17:36, 37.

WE have all thought a great deal of the courage of David in meeting giant Goliath, but probably we have not given him credit for his conduct in a previous contest. We have not sufficiently noticed that immediately before the encounter with the Philistine he fought a battle which cost him far more thought, prudence and patience. The battle of words in which he had to engage with his brothers and with King Saul was a more trying ordeal to him than going forth in the strength of the Lord to smite the uncircumcised boaster. Many a man meets with more trouble from his friends than from his enemies. And when he has learned to overcome the depressing influence of prudent friends he makes short work of the opposition of avowed adversaries.

Observe that David had first to contend with his own brothers. I hardly think Eliab was so much swayed by envy as has been supposed. I fancy that Eliab had too much contempt for his young brother to envy him. He thought it ridiculous that a youth so given to music and piety and gentle pursuits should dream of encountering a giant. He derided the idea of his being equal to such a task and only feared, lest in a moment of foolish enthusiasm, he might throw his life away in the mad enterprise. And therefore Eliab somewhat superciliously, but still somewhat in the spirit natural to an elder brother who feels himself a sort of guardian to the younger members of the house, chided him and told him that only pride and curiosity had brought him there at all and that he had better have remained with his sheep in the wilderness.

Such a youth, he thought, was more fit among lambs than among warriors, and more likely to be in his place beneath a tree with his shepherd's pipe than in the midst of a battle. David met this charge in the very wisest way—he answered with a few soft words, and then turned away. He did not continue to argue, for in such a contest, to multiply words is to increase ill feelings and he who is silent first is the conqueror. Grandly did this young man restrain himself, though the provocation was very severe, and herein he won the honors of the man who restrains his spirit and greater than the soldier who takes a city. I admire David as he selects his five smooth stones from the brook, but I admire him quite as much when he so gently replies where others might have been angry—and then so

wisely turns aside from a debate which could not have been to the profit of either party.

Next, he is brought before Saul and enters upon a contest with a king to whom he felt loyal respect, and with a soldier who had been a man of war from his youth up and had worked many famous deeds, one, therefore, to whom David looked up with not a little reverence. When king Saul said to him, "You are not able to fight with this Philistine, for you are but a youth and he a man of war from his youth," it must have been somewhat difficult for the young hero to cope with the weighty judgment. And yet he did so, answering meekly, forcibly and in all respects well. Did you notice how David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him." He did not say, "Let not *your heart fail you*"—he was too much of a courtier for that—he had too much delicacy of mind to insinuate that a royal heart could fear.

When he proceeded to argue with the king it was in the most polite and deferential manners. He begins, "Your servant kept his father's sheep." He calls himself a servant of the king and does not hesitate to admit that he is only a shepherd who had no flock of his own, but served under his father. There was nothing like assumption, but the very reverse. Yet while he used soft words, he brought forth hard arguments. He mentioned facts and these are always the best weapons against carnal reasoning. Saul said, "You are not able to meet this Philistine." But David replied, "Your servant slew both the lion and the bear." He placed facts against mere opinions and won the day.

He did not quote Scripture to the king, for I suppose he knew Saul too well for that, and felt that he had not Grace enough to be swayed by the promises and examples of Holy Writ. But he brought facts before him, knowing well how to give a reason for the hope that was in him with meekness and fear. His arguments quite overcame the opposition of Saul, which would have dampened the enthusiasm of many. And so Saul not only commissioned him to go and fight the Philistine, saying, "Go, and the Lord be with you," but he actually clothed him in his royal armor, which was of no small value and which, of course, would have increased the honors of the Philistine champion had David fallen before him.

Some little faith in David was kindled in Saul's bosom and he was willing to trust his armor in his hands. Thus it is clear that David fought the battles with Saul as admirably as he afterwards conducted his duel with the giant—and he deserves no small honor for it. No, rather unto God be honor who while He taught His servant's hands to war, and his fingers to fight, also taught his tongue to utter right words by which he put to silence those who would have abashed him! What was the meat of David's argument? What were the five smooth stones which he threw at the head of carnal reasoning?

That shall be the subject of this morning's discourse. We will consider the way in which he argued down all doubts and fears and, by the Spirit of God, was nerved to go forth to deeds of sacred daring in the name of the Most High, for the same conquering arguments may, perhaps, serve our

turn also. Three things are before us in the text, *recollections, reasonings and results*.

I. First, RECOLLECTIONS. “*Your servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and smote him, and slew him. Your servant slew both the lion and the bear.*” These were noteworthy facts which David had stored up in his memory. And he now mentions them, for they exactly answered his purpose. We ought not to be unmindful of the way by which the Lord our God has led us, for if we are, we shall lose much.

Some saints have very short memories. It has been well said that we write our benefits in dust and our injuries in marble! And it is equally true that we generally inscribe our afflictions upon brass, while the records of the deliverances of God are written in water. It ought not to be! If our memories were more tenacious of the merciful visitations of our God, our faith would often be strengthened in times of trial.

Now, what did David remember, for I want you to remember the same. He remembered, first, that whatever his present trial might be, *he had been tried before*—tried when he was but a young man peacefully employed in keeping his father’s flocks. A lion rushed upon his prey and he had to defend his sheep—that was no small trial for a young man—to have to meet a savage beast, strong, furious and probably ravenous with hunger. Yet the ordeal had not destroyed him and he felt sure that another of the same kind would not do so.

He had encountered that danger in the course of his duty, when he was in his proper place and engaged in his lawful calling. And he had thereby learned that the path of duty is not without its difficulties and perils. He was keeping his flock as he ought to be and yet a lion attacked him. And so you and I have met with trials which did not arise from sin, but, on the other hand, came to us because we conscientiously did the right thing and would not yield to temptation. We must not think that we are out of the right road when we meet with difficulties, for we must expect, through much tribulation, to inherit the kingdom of God. Severe afflictions and afflictions arising out of holy walking are not new things to us! Let us now remember our old encounters.

He remembered, too, that *he had been tried frequently*. He had not only been attacked by a lion, but also by a bear. He had been tried in different ways, for lions and bears do not fight exactly in the same manner, neither are they to be met with precisely the same tactics. David remembered that his trials had been of different sorts and that in each case the battle had been hard. It was no small matter to fight hand to hand with a lion, and no child’s play to rush single-handed upon a bear. We, also, in looking back, remember sharp encounters with foes of many kinds which were terrible battles to us at the time.

Brothers and Sisters, some of us who have been for years in the ways of the Lord can tell of shrewd brushes with the enemy. We can speak of wounds and ugly tears of which we wear the scars to this day. Many have

been our adversaries, and furious—yet we have been upheld till now by Jesus, the Captain of our salvation! Why, then, should we fear concerning the present fiery trial, as though some strange thing had happened to us? Is it a Philistine this time? Well, it was a lion before, and a bear on another occasion—it is only a little change of the same constant trial of our faith—therefore let us not shrink from the conflict.

Next, David remembered that *he had risked all in the prosecution of his duty*. He was set to take care of the sheep and the lambs and he did so. A lion had dared to leap into the fold and seize a lamb, and without a single thought of anything but the lamb and his own duty, the young shepherd rushed upon the monster with all the ardor of youth! And smiting him with his crook compelled him to drop his prey. He had put his own life in jeopardy for the poor defenseless lamb. Can you not remember, my Christian Brothers and Sisters, when you, also, took no thought as to what you should lose if you followed Christ and cared not if it cost you your very life? With earnest honesty you desired to learn what you ought to do and you did it, regardless of the cost.

You defied Reproach, slander, misrepresentation and unkindness, so long as you could but clear your conscience and honor your Lord. O blessed recklessness! Do you remember those early days when you could cheerfully have gone to prison and to death for Christ's sake? For Scriptural doctrines and ordinances you would willingly have suffered martyrdom! Perhaps some of you have, on more than one occasion, actually risked everything for the sake of integrity and for the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ, even as others have defied the utmost power of Satan and the most virulent hatred of men for the sake of the Lord God of Hosts. You have felt that you could sooner die than deny the Truth of God and sooner perish from off the face of the earth than to turn from the trust which the Lord had committed to you.

Look back upon your brave days, my Brothers and Sisters, not that you may be proud of what you did, but that you may be ashamed if you are afraid to do the same today! Blush if what you could do as a babe in Grace should appear too difficult for you in riper years! These remembrances have precious uses—they will lead us to bless God and humble ourselves in His Presence.

Next David remembered that *he had on that occasion gone alone to the fray*. The antagonist was a lion! A dozen men might have found themselves too few for the fight and David remembered that in that contest he was quite alone—he had not called in other shepherds to the rescue, but armed only with his crook, he had belabored the lion till the monster found it convenient to leave his prey and turn upon the young shepherd. David was ready for him, seized him by his beard, dashed his head upon the rocks and did not relinquish his grasp till the king of beasts lay dead at his feet. It was a grand incident, even had it stood alone, but a bear had supplied an equally memorable trophy.

Some of us may well recall hours in our past lives when we were all alone and, as we went forth to serve the Lord Jesus, our enterprise was regarded as Utopian and spoken of as sure to end in failure. Many a good

man has gone forth for Christ's sake even *worse* than alone, for those who should have aided have done their best to criticize and prophesy disaster. But men whom God ordains to honor have shut their ears to critics and pushed on till they have reached success. And *then* everybody has said, "We always thought so," and not a few have even claimed to have been ardent admirers all along!

Brother, do you remember when everyone said you were foolhardy and self-sufficient, and regarded your course as absurd and sure to come to an end? Remember when they said six months were to see the end of your career which was a mere bubble and would soon collapse? Ah, those were brave times when the Lord was with you and man's opinion weighed but lightly! It may be that your relatives turned their backs upon you and no man would give you a good word. And yet, in the name of the Lord God of Hosts, you did the right and dared all results! And you have had no cause to regret it, but overflowing reasons to bless God that He strengthened you to "dare to be a Daniel and dare to stand alone."

Look back at that courageous hour, and now that you are surrounded by a goodly company of friends, think whether you have as simple a trust in God, now, as you manifested then. If you judge that you have, prove by your actions that you can still dare to go forward under difficulties, unshackled by dependence on an arm of flesh. The discipline of desertion ought not to have been lost upon you—you ought to be all the stronger for having been compelled to walk alone. The friendship of your fellows has been a loss rather than a gain if you cannot now wage single-handed battle as you did in former times. Have you now become slavishly dependent on an arm of flesh? If so, chide yourself by the memories of braver days!

David also remembered that on that occasion, when he smote the lion and the bear, *he had nothing visible to rely upon, but simply trusted his God*. He had in his hand no sharp weapon of iron with which to smite the wild beast to the heart. Careless as to weapons, he thought only of his God and rushed on the foe. He was as yet a young man, his muscles were not set and strong, neither did he seem fit for such a venturesome deed! But his God was almighty and, reliant upon the Omnipotence of God, he thought nothing of his youth, but flung himself into the fray. What more in the way of help did he need, since God was with him? Oh, Brothers and Sisters, there were times, with some of us, when we commenced our work when our sole reliance was the unseen Lord!

We were cast upon the invisible power of God and if that could fail us we must fail. Our attempts were such as carnal reason could not justify, such indeed as only Divine interposition could carry through! We were right enough if the Divine power could be calculated on, but apart from that, we were near insane! Glory be to God, He has been as good as His word! Our faith has been justified by results and unbelief has been struck dumb. The Lord taught us to rest in Him from our youth up and to declare His wondrous works! And now that we have tried and proved His faithfulness, we dare not hide these things from the generation following. Our witness must be borne even though we should be charged with boasting! "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord."

But can it be true that now we have begun to coolly calculate *means* and to rely upon methods and plans, whereas once we looked to God, alone? Do we now trust in this friend and rely on that, and distrust the Lord if friends are few? Shame upon us if we do, for this is to leave the way of victory for the path of defeat, to come down from the heroic track to the common highway of carnal reasoning and so to fall into care, fretfulness, weakness and dishonor! Happy is the man who trusts in the Lord, alone, by unstaggering faith! He shall go from strength to strength, but he who chooses to walk by sight shall utterly decay.

David remembered, also, that *the tactics which he adopted on that occasion were natural, artless and vigorous*. All that he did was just smite the lion and the bear with his staff, or whatever came first to hand, and then to fight as nature and the occasion suggested. He did what his courage prompted, without waiting to consult a committee of lion-slayers and bear-trappers. His whole art was *faith!* This was his science and his skill. He consulted not with flesh and blood. He followed no precedents, imitated no noted hunters and encumbered himself with no rules. He did his best as his faith in God directed him. He threw his whole soul into the conflict and fought vigorously, for his faith did not make him sit still and expect the lion to die in a fit, or the bear to become insensible.

He seemed to say to himself, “Now, David, if anything is to be done, you must be all here and every muscle you have must be put to the strain. You have a lion to fight with, therefore stir up your strength and while you rely upon God, alone, take care to play the man this day for your father’s flock.” Courage supplied coolness. And energy, backed up by confidence, won the day. Do you remember, my Brother, when in your own way you did the same? You were reliant upon God but not idle. You put your whole force of soul and energy into your Master’s service, as if it all rested on you and yet, you depended wholly on Him and you succeeded! How is it with you now? Do you now take things easily? Do you wonder that you do not succeed? If you are growing cold and careless. If you are getting sleepy and dull, rebuke your soul and use your past experience as a whip with which to flog yourself into energy! Let it never be said that he who woke himself up to fight a lion now falls asleep in the presence of a Philistine!

David remembered *that by confidence in God his energetic fighting gained the victory*—the lion was killed and the bear was killed, too. And cannot you remember, Brothers and Sisters, what victories God gave you? When you were little in Israel and despised, yet His hand was upon you! And when few would bid you God speed, yet the Jehovah of Hosts encouraged your heart! And when you were feeble and but a youth, the Lord Jesus helped you to do exploits for Him in your own way. Remember this, and be of good courage this morning in the conflict which now lies before you. David talked of his former deeds somewhat reluctantly. I do not know that he had ever spoken of them before. He did so on this occasion with the sole motive of glorifying God and that he might be allowed to repeat them.

He ravished for permission from Saul to confront the Philistine champion and bring yet greater glory to God! Brethren, whenever you talk of

what God enabled you to do, mind you lay the stress upon God's *enabling*, and not upon your own doings. And when you rehearse the story of your early days, let it not be as a reason why you should now be exonerated from service and be allowed to retire upon your laurels, but as an argument why you should now be allowed the most arduous and dangerous post in the battle! Let the past be a stepping stone to something higher—an incentive to nobler enterprise.

On, on you soldiers of the Cross! In God's name eclipse your former selves! As Grace enabled you to pile the carcass of the bear upon the corpse of the lion, so now resolve that the Philistine shall increase the heap and his head shall crown the whole, to the honor and glory of the God of Israel! So much for remembrances. I pity the man who has none of them and I pity, yet more, the man who, having them, is now afraid to risk all for his Lord!

II. Now for REASONING. David used an argument in which no flaw can be found. He said, "The case of this Philistine is a parallel one to that of the lion. If I act in the same manner, by faith in God, with this giant as I did with the lion, God is the same and, therefore, the result will be the same." That seems to me to be very good reasoning and I bid you adopt it. Such-and-such was my past difficulty and my present trouble is of the same order. In that past trial I rested upon God and acted in a right way—and He delivered me. Therefore, if I trust in God, still, and do as before, He is the same as ever—and I shall triumph again!

Let us now consider the case and we shall see that it really was parallel. There was the flock, defenseless. Here is Israel, God's flock, defenseless, too, with no one to take up its cause. In all the camp there was not one single man who dared take up the giant challenge. David was a shepherd and, therefore, as a shepherd, bound to defend his flock. And in the present instance he remembered, I doubt not, that Samuel had anointed him to be king over Israel and he felt that some of the responsibility of the anointing rested upon him even then. And if no other man would play the shepherd, the anointed son of Jesse must do it!

And so it looked to him like a parallel case—Israel the flock and he the shepherd who must defend it. He was alone that day when he smote the lion and so he was this day when he was to confront his enormous foe. Of course it was one of the conditions of a duel that the Israelite champion should go forth, alone, and besides that, there was no one in all the camp who was likely to wish to accompany him upon such an errand. So, now that he was all alone, the case was the more truly parallel! As for that Philistine, he felt that in him he had an antagonist of the old sort. It was brute force before. It was brute force now.

It might take the shape of a lion or a bear or a Philistine, but David considered that it was only so much flesh and bone and muscle—so much brag or roar, tooth or spear. He considered the Philistine to be only a wild animal of another shape because he was not in Covenant with God, and dared to put himself in opposition to the Most High! My Brothers and Sisters, a man who has God for a friend is higher than an angel, but a man who is God's enemy is no better than a beast! Reckon him so and your

fears of him will vanish! Goliath was mighty, but so was the lion. He was cunning, but so was the bear. The case was only a repetition of the former combat.

And as God was not with the lion, nor with the bear, so David felt that God was not with Goliath and could not be, for he was the enemy of God's Israel. And as God had been with him when fighting the wild beasts, so he felt that God was with him now. It looked to him as if he had already twice gone through a rehearsal of all this when he was in the wilderness, alone, and therefore he could the more easily go through it now. Perhaps there flashed in his mind the case of Samson, who learned to slay the Philistines by rending a lion when he was alone in the vineyard. So David felt, "I have killed my lion like Samson and now, like Samson, I go to fight this Philistine, or a thousand like he, if need be, in the name of the Lord of Hosts."

The whole argument is this—in the one case, by such tactics we have been successful, trusting in God—and, therefore, in a similar case we have only to do the same and we shall realize the same victory! Brothers and Sisters, here is a fault with most of us, that when we look back upon past deliverances we do not draw this parallel, but on the contrary, the temptation haunts us to think that our present trial is clearly a new case! For instance, David might have said, "When I slew that lion I was younger than I am now and I had more courage and vivacity, but those shrewd brushes have strained me somewhat and I had better be more prudent."

Just as you and I say, sometimes, "Ah, what I did was done when I was a young man, I cannot do the same *now*. That trouble which I bore so patiently, by God's Grace, was in other times. But this affliction has come upon me when I am less able to endure it, for I have not the elasticity of spirit which once I had, nor the vigor I formerly possessed." When we want to escape from some arduous work, we do it by trying to show that we are not under the same obligations as in former days. We know in our conscience that if we did great things when we were young we ought to do greater things now that we are older, wiser, more experienced and more trained in war—but we try to argue our conscience into silence.

If the Lord helped us to bear with patience, or to labor with zeal after all the experience we have had, that patience and zeal should now be easier to us than before. Alas, we do not argue so, but to our shame we excuse ourselves and live ingloriously. I know a man who, today, says, "Yes. What we did in years gone by, we did in our heroic age, but we are not so enthusiastic now." And why not? We are so apt to magnify our former selves and think of our early deeds as of something to be wondered at but not to be attempted now! We are *fools* for they were little enough in all conscience and ought to be outdone!

Oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, this resting on our oars will not do! We are drifting down with the tide. David did not say, "I slew a lion and a bear so I have had my turn at such bouts. Let somebody else go and fight that Philistine!" Yet we have heard people say, "When I was a young man I taught in the Sunday school. I used to go out preaching in the villages and so on." Oh, Brother, and why not do it *now*? I think you ought to be

doing *more* instead of less! As God gives you more knowledge, more experience and more Grace, surely your labors for Him ought to be more abundant than they used to be, but, alas, you do not look on it as a parallel case, and so make excuses for yourself.

Too often in our spiritual work we fix our mind upon the *differences* rather than upon the similarities. For instance, David might have said, "I would not mind another lion. I can manage lions. I would not be afraid of half-a-dozen more bears, I am used to bears. But this Philistine is a new sort of monster." No, David saw it was the same thing, after all, a little different in shape but the same brute force—and so he went at it with courage. But we say, "Alas, there is a great difference! Our present trials have an unusual bitterness in them." "I," cries the widow, "I lost my husband and God helped and my son has been a stay to me. But now *he*, too, is gone, and I have no other son, and no one to fall back upon."

She points out the difference, though the trouble is virtually the same! Would it not be far better if she pleaded the same promise and believed in the Lord as she did before? One man will say, "Ah, yes, I did, on such an occasion, run all risks for God. But, you see, there is a difference here." I know there is, my dear Brother, there is a little difference and if you fix your eyes on *that*, you will drill yourself into unbelief! But difference or no difference, where duty calls or if you should be called to bear such an affliction as never befell mortal man, before, yet remember God's arm is not shortened that He cannot deliver His servants! You have but to commit yourself to Him and out of the sevenfold adversity you shall come forth a sevenfold conqueror!

We are very apt, too, to look back upon the past and say, "I know that there are some grand things the Lord did for me and my venture for His sake turned out well, but I do not know what I should have done if a happy circumstance had not occurred to help me just in the nick of time." We dare to attribute our deliverance to some very "happy accident"! It is very base of us to do so, for it was *the Lord* who helped us from first to last—the happy occurrence was a mere second cause! And cannot God give us another "happy accident," if necessary, in this present trouble? "Alas," our unbelief says, "there was a circumstance in that case which really did alter it, and I cannot expect anything like that to occur now." Oh, how wrong this is of us! How we lose the force of that blessed reasoning from parallels which might have supplied us with courage! God grant we may break loose from this net!

Possibly our coward heart suggests "Perhaps, after all, this deed of courage may not be quite my calling and I had better not attempt it." David might have said, "I am a shepherd and I can fight with lions, but I was never trained to war, and therefore I had better let this Philistine alone." He might, also, have discovered that he was better adapted for protecting sheep than for becoming the champion of a nation. We must guard against the use of this plausible pretext, for pretext it is. Brethren, if we have achieved success by the power of God, let us not dote upon some supposed adaptation, but stand prepared to be used of the Lord in any other way which He may choose!

Adaptation is unknown till the event proves it—and our Lord is a far better judge of that than we are! If you see before you a work by means of which you can glorify God and bless the Church, do not hesitate, but enter upon it in reliance upon your God! Do not stand stuttering and stammering and talking about qualifications and so on, but what your hand finds to do, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus who has bought you with His blood! Prove your qualifications by bringing Goliath's head back with you and no further questions will be asked by anyone—or by yourself!

So, too, sometimes we frame an excuse out of the opinions of others. We are apt to feel that we really must consider what other people say. Our good brother Eliab may be a little crusty in temper, but still, he is a man of a good deal of prudence and experience. And he tells us to be quiet and let these things alone and, perhaps, we had better do so. And there is Saul. Well, he is a man of great acquaintance with such matters! He judges that we had better decline the task and, therefore, upon the whole we had better exhibit that prudence which is the better part of valor and not rush upon certain danger and probable destruction.

This seeking advice and following cowardly counsel is all too common! We know that some strenuous effort is needed and it is in our power, but we desire ease and, therefore, we employ other men to weave excuses for us. It would be more honest to say outright that we do not want to do any more. Were we more full of love to Jesus, this unworthy device would be scorned by us and in sacred manliness of mind we would scorn the counsel which tends to cowardice. Others cannot bear our responsibility—we must, each one, give an account of himself to God—why, then, yield to the judgement of men?

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, fling this folly to the winds! Obey the dictates of the Holy Spirit and close your ears to the advice of unbelief! Men or women consecrated to God, if the Lord impels you to do anything for Him, do not ask *me*, do not ask my fellow Church officers, but go and do it! If God has helped you in the past, draw a parallel and argue from it that He will help you in the present. Go, and the Lord go with you! Do not fall prey to that wicked unbelief which would rob you of your strength!

III. The last thing is RESULTS. The results were, first, that David felt he would, as he did before, *rely upon God alone*. Come to the same resolution, Brothers and Sisters! God, alone is the source of power! He alone can render real aid! Let us then rest in Him, even if no other help appears. Is not the Lord, alone, enough? That arm which you cannot see will never be palsied. Its sinews will never crack, but all the arms of mortals upon which you so much love to lean must, one day, turn to dust in the tomb. And while they live, they are but weakness itself. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. David had found wisdom's self when he said, "My soul waits only upon God, for my expectation is from Him."

David resolved, again, *to run all risks once more*, as he had done before. As he had ventured himself against the lion, so would he put his life in His hands and engage the Philistine. Come wounds and maiming! Come piercing spear or cutting sword! Come death, itself! Amid the taunts and

exultations of his giant foe, he would still dare everything for Israel's sake and for God's sake! Soldiers of the Cross, if you feel that you can do this, be not slow to put it into practice! Throw yourselves wholly into the Lord's service! Consecrate yourselves and your substance to the grand end of glorifying Christ, fighting against error and plucking souls from destruction!

David's next step was *to put himself into the same condition as on former occasions*, by divesting himself of everything that hampered him. He had fought the lion with nature's weapons and so would he meet the Philistine. Off went that glittering royal helmet which, no doubt, made his head ache with its weight! Off went the cumbersome armor in which he found it very hard to move! In such a metallic prison he did not feel like David a bit and, therefore, he put all aside and wore only his shepherd's frock! As for that magnificent sword which he had just strapped by his side, he felt that it would be more ornament than use—and so he laid it aside with the rest of the trappings. He put on his pouch and took nothing with him but his sling and stones.

This was the old style and he did well to keep to it, for the Lord saves not with sword and spear! We are all too apt to get into a fine harness and tie ourselves up with rules and methods. The art of getting rid of all baggage is a noble one, but few have learned it. Look at our Churches! Look at the Church at large—is there not enough red tape about to strangle a nation? Have we not committees enough to sink a ship with their weight? As for patrons, presidents, vice-presidents and secretaries, had not Christianity been Divine it could not have lived under the load of these personages who sit on her bosom! The roundabouts are worrying straightforward action out of the world. We are organized into strait waistcoats! The vessel of the Church has such an awful lot of top-hammer that I wonder how she can be navigated at all! And if a tempest were to come on she would have to cut herself free from nearly all of it.

When shall we get at the work? If there should ever come a day when Brothers will go forth preaching the Gospel, simply resting in faith upon the Lord alone, I, for one, expect to see grand results! But at present, Saul's armor is everywhere! When we get rid of formality in preaching, we shall see great results! But the Churches are locked up in irons which they call armor. Why, dear me, if we are to have a special service, one Brother must have it conducted in the Moody method and another can only have Sankey hymns! Who, then, are we that we must follow others? Do not talk to us about innovations and all that—away with your rubbish!

Let us serve God with all our hearts and preach Jesus Christ to sinners with our whole souls—the *mode* is of no consequence! To preach down priestcraft and error, and do it in the simplest possible manner—by preaching up Christ—is the way of wisdom! We must preach, not after the manner of doctors of divinity, but after the manner of those unlearned and ignorant men in the olden time who had been with Jesus and learned of Him! Brothers, some of you have too much armor on! Take it off! Be simple, be natural, be artless, be plain-spoken, be trustful in the living God and you will succeed! Less of the artificer's brass and more of

Heaven-anointed manhood is needed! More sanctified naturalness and less of studied artificialness! O Lord, send us this, for Christ's sake. Amen.

The ultimate result was that the young champion came back with Goliath's head in his hand! And equally sure triumphs await every one of you if you rely on the Lord and act in simple earnestness. If for Christ, my Sister, you will go forward in His work, resting upon Him, you shall see souls converted by your instrumentality. If, my Brother, you will but venture everything for Christ's glory and depend, alone, on Him, what men call fanaticism shall be considered by God to be only sacred consecration and He will send you the reward which He always gives to a full, thorough, simple, unselfish faith in Himself.

If the result of my preaching this sermon should be to stir up half a dozen workers to some venturesome zeal for God, I shall greatly rejoice. I remember when I commenced this work in London, God being with me, I said if He would only give me half a dozen good men and women, a work would be done, but that if I had half a dozen *thousand* sleepy people nothing would be accomplished. At this time I am always afraid of our falling into a lethargic condition. This Church numbers nearly 5,000 members, but if you are only 5,000 cowards, the battle will bring no glory to God! If we have one David among us, that one hero will do wonders! But think what an army would be if all the soldiers were Davids—it would be an ill case with the Philistines, then!

Oh that we were all Davids! That the weakest among us were as David and David, himself, were better than he is, and became like an angel of the Lord! God's Holy Spirit is equal to the doing of this and why should He not do it? Let us call to Him for help and that help will come! I must just say this word to some here present who lament that there is nothing in this sermon for them. Unconverted persons, you cannot draw any argument from your past experience, for you have none of a right kind. But you may draw comfort, and I pray you do, from another view of this story.

Jesus Christ, the true David, has plucked some of us like lambs from between the jaws of the devil. Many of us were carried captive by sin. Transgression had so encompassed us about that we were unable to escape. But our great Lord delivered us! Sinner, why can He not deliver *you*? If you cannot fight the lion of the pit, HE can! Do you ask me, What are you to do? Well, call for His help as loudly as you can. If you are like a lamb, bleat to Him, and the bleating of the lamb will attract the shepherd's ear. Cry mightily unto the Lord for salvation and trust, alone, in the Lord Jesus! He will save you! If you were between the jaws of Hell, yet, if you believed in Him, He would surely pluck you out of destruction. God grant you may find it so, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Samuel 17:23-51.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—73, 674, 681.**

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THE LION AND THE BEAR— TROPHIES HUNG UP NO. 1810

A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 25, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Your servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.”
1 Samuel 17:36, 37.

DAVID had lived with God. Throughout many a solitary day he had kept his father's flock among the lone hills of Judah and had worshipped the Unseen but Ever-Present Lord. He had grown into an adoring familiarity with the Most High so that, to him, the name of the one and only living and true God was a deep and solemn joy. As you may have spied far up among the ramparts of the mountains a solitary lake, whose one office it is to mirror the face of Heaven, so had David's hallowed life become the reflection of the Light and Glory of the Lord of Hosts. It had not occurred to him, in his meditations, that base men would dare to challenge the infinite majesty of God, or that proud adversaries would come forward and defy the chosen people of the Most High—but now that he hears the defiance and beholds the challenge, all his blood is up. He is amazed! A holy rage is upon him! Yes, it is true—he hears Jehovah blasphemed! How can it be? The youth's holy soul is undergoing a new experience. He is bringing his whole life to bear upon it. He reaches the conclusion that as bears and lions die when they meddle with sheep, so must Goliath fall, now that he dares to attack the Lord and His people.

When David finds himself in the camp and when he hears Goliath of Gath pouring forth his blasphemies against Jehovah and defying Jehovah's people, David has no thought of having been mistaken in his former lofty adoration. He entertains no notion of adopting a lower style, but he inwardly burns with indignation against the infamous reviler. An insult against God cannot be allowed! This abominable blasphemer must be silenced. Somebody must put him down and so dispose of him that none shall ever dare, again, to do the same. David enquires whether somebody or other is not going to batter the bronze champion. If any man in the camp will meet this huge man-mountain, David will not stand in his way—he is not so covetous of glory as to deprive a more deserving person of these huge materials for renown. But it is imperative that some hand should silence that hillock of proud flesh! It is driven in upon David's de-

vout heart that this blasphemous mouth must be shut and God's name and God's people must be clear of such a brutal enemy.

About the stilling of this enemy and avenger David has no enquiry to make. It is going to be done, done soon, and done without any particular display. When he kept his sheep and the lion came, David did not raise the question whether he could kill the lion—he killed him—and the question was settled. When the bear came and was about to rob him of one of his lambs, he did not say to himself, "Have I a call to kill that bear?" Not he—he killed him—and then he knew he was called to do it! He feels within himself at this moment, "If nobody else will deal with this Philistine difficulty, I must do so, for I cannot live and see God opposed. Jehovah is All in All and beside Him there is none else—He can put an end to an opponent with a word—it must not be that He shall be insulted continually after this fashion. I feel an impulse upon me. This Philistine has defied the armies of the living God and down he shall come."

And so, yielding to the Divine impulses by which the truly great are led, David puts himself forward to stand in single combat with an enormous giant. Observe a stripling set over against a son of Anak—but when you have made the observation, be sure to note that the stripling, by no means, seeks your sympathy, or appeals to your pity. It sometimes happens that a tremor will come over a man when he feels that he has stepped out of the ranks and come forward without any call from his fellow men—when he feels that he has taken up Jehovah's quarrel and constituted himself the champion of the Most High. If he is not quite sure about his commission and if he is not quite sure that God is with him, he will soon repent his own temerity and make an ignominious retreat.

In David's case there is no flush of excitement, no fierce light of eyes lit up with a semi-madness. Evidently he is quite at home and has the entire business well in hand. He tells us why he is so bravely venturesome. It is well worth our while to see what made David so strong and confident, for if it has never occurred to us, up to now, it may yet occur that *we* shall be called out to do some deed of daring for the Lord. Come, let us learn how to be Davids, should a voice call us from among the sheepfolds! I wish that young men here would aspire to brave lives for the God of Israel. I would that for the Truth of God, goodness and the eternal Glory, they would be ready to rise to the measure of their destined hour. Why should we all be mean men? Is there not room for a few downright devoted beings who will lift their hands unto the Lord and never go back? If self-sacrifice is needed, let us make it. If someone is needed for a heathen land, or to bear testimony for the Truth of God in this almost apostate nation, let us cry, "Here am I! Send me!"

God's David will not hang back through cowardly fear or dread of consequences, but will take up his place, as God shall help him, and say, like Martin Luther, "I can do no other: so help me, O my God." We shall see what made David so calm and self-possessed as to venture where nobody else would venture and take up the gauntlet and dare to be the champion of the living God. Oh, souls that dwell apart, and wear, each one, a lone star upon his brow, here are kindred flames for you! The first head will be, *the confidence of David*. And when I have spoken upon that, as God shall

help me, we will then consider, for a little time, *David as the type of the great Son of David*, and think about *that confidence which we ought to repose in Him*.

First, THE CONFIDENCE OF DAVID. He does not go to this battle with any kind of hesitation, calculation, or question of fear, but he is quite sure of the result and proceeds about it with a quiet reserve of force. One would have thought that he, himself, was a colossal presence and that the person to be assailed was some pigmy, for he talks with such calm assurance—"Let no man's heart fail him. Your servant will fight with this uncircumcised Philistine." It would have been fearful brag if it had not been simple matter of fact.

I. *The confidence of David*, in the first place, *was grounded upon his own personal experience*. Beloved, if you would display strong confidence in God—firm, calm, steady—you must look, in a large measure, to the experience you have had of the goodness and faithfulness of God. The Lord, in mercy, often keeps young beginners from those severe and heavy trials which befall the more advanced because, to them, this fountain of strength, namely, a profound personal experience, is not yet accessible except in rare instances. The young have not as yet obtained much experience of the things of God. But those who have been led a certain distance onward in the Divine life have tried and proved the promises—and the promise-keeping power and faithfulness of God—and they can draw from this well with the highest results.

But, Beloved, I would have you remember that experience does not come to people if they sit still. When David was young in years, he was old in experience because he had watched the hand of the Lord in its dealings with him. He had not been an idler among the hills, but a *worshipper*, a *worker*, a *student*, a practical, living man of God. You must go and meet an experience if that experience is to bring you riches in both its hands. I mean that David's experience was that God delivered him out of the jaw of the lion—but he, first, went and fought that lion by his own dauntless valor! He took the lamb out of his mouth and he laid hold upon his jaws and tore him in pieces. David went forth to meet that experience. And the bear that came to David—David did not sit still and watch the bear, let it come and roar, take its prey and then retreat as it liked—he struggled with that bear and he slew him! And thus he gained his experience by the *active* discharge of his duties as a shepherd. He did what he was called upon to do with holy daring and, in so doing, he learned the faithfulness of God. Many men have lions and bears, but no experience. Be alive and get something out of all that happens around you!

You younger Christian men and women, I do pray you be faithful to your God and put your trust in Him. Try to do, in your earliest days, brave things, because in this manner you will be gaining and storing up an experience which will make you strong, in later days, to attempt yet more for God! I long to see a better race than the present and how shall that be prepared but among the brave and loyal-hearted youth of today? Do you not know the way in which God rewards His faithful servants here on earth? He does it, usually, by enabling them to do, in the future, something more than they have done before! You have fought in that battle.

Take this as your reward—you shall fight again tomorrow! You have achieved a second victory? Take this as your bonus—you shall be led to a still sterner fight! Oh, you who have frowned down the face of death and have bearded destruction in its own den, you shall lead a second forlorn hope and pluck victory from the bloody brows of battle! You shall be among the choice warriors of the King, first in every fray!

Some, perhaps, may think this a small reward, but this shows that their hearts are not yet raised into the lordlier chivalry, nor sworn into the innermost love of the great King. When the heart is wholly given up to Christ, our one desire is that we may glorify Him! Therefore, I would have you take care and kill your lions and kill your bears, that you may store up your experiences and be able to kill your Philistines! If David had not killed the first lion and bear, he would not have been able to meet any other ferocious creatures. There is any quantity of them about, but no one but brave David had specially cultivated their acquaintance. I say there is plenty of the raw material of experience about, only people do not go in for it. These evil creatures are up and down, all over the place—lions of one kind and bears of another, tearing or roaring, howling or hugging, drawing down or tossing up—in every way trying to destroy us! And if you are a born hunter, you shall have ages of experience within the next 12 months! Take care that you do it. Do not become constant idlers and then talk about Christian experience.

Oh for true, deep, rich experience! Some of you need it badly enough. What kind of experience will some professors have when they come to be 60 or 70 years of age? They never labored in the Sunday school to teach a child, never stood up to preach Christ, never penetrated a lodging house, nor entered a midnight meeting to try and uncover a wanderer for Jesus. These have *no* experience—they are hollow as drums! They have done *nothing*! Their spiritual life has been a blank. If a sharp trial should come to them, upon what experience could they fall back? They are soldiers who have never smelt powder! Warriors who faint at the sight of blood! How shall they win eternal victory who, till this hour, have taken their ease and declined the labor and the danger of the war? I charge you, therefore, my beloved Brothers and Sisters who know the Lord, be up and in earnest to slay your lions and your bears, that you may learn how to kill your Philistines! That is to say—serve God with all your heart and patiently bear your cross for His name's sake, so that when the time shall come for you to stand as a lone man for Christ, you may do it gloriously and may bring honor to your Divine Leader. As stands a rock in mid-ocean, bearing the full fury of the storm, so may we, in strength derived from a long, happy, useful experience in the past, be steadfast and unmovable for the Truth of God and for the Cross.

That is our first note about David's confidence—it comes from *experience*—and ours must do the same.

II. You will notice, secondly, that in David's confidence there is a *blending of the human with the Divine*. Observe—"Your servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." That is the human. "David said, moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will de-

liver me out of the hand of this Philistine.” That is the Divine side of it. In God’s Word, the car of Truth runs on two rails of parallel statement. A great many people want to pull up one of the rails. They will not accept two sets of truth. “Predestination and free agency do not agree,” so the modern Solomon’s assert! Who said, “they do not agree”? They *do* agree as fully as two rails on the tram line—but some narrow spirits must set aside either the one or the other—they cannot accept *both*.

This has long been a puzzle on paper, but in practice it is ease, itself! So here the practical action of the Believer, throwing his whole might into his Master’s service, perfectly agrees with his falling back upon the working of God and knowing that it is *God* that works *all things* for him! David’s slaying of the lion and the bear and the Philistine is clear—but God’s delivering him out of the jaw of the lion, the paw of the bear and the hand of the Philistine is equally clear! Make it plain to yourself! I believe that when I preach, I ought to prepare and study my sermon as if its success altogether depended upon *me*, but that, when I am thus thoroughly furnished, I am to trust in God as much as if I had done *nothing at all*. The same view should be taken of your life and of your service for God. Work as if you were to be saved by your works—and then trust Christ, only—since it is only by faith in Him that you are capable of a single good work! Work for God with all your might, as if you did it all, but then, always remember that “it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”

How is that Philistine to be killed? “By God,” says one. True. But not without David. “By David,” says another. Yes, but not without God! Put the Lord on the march with David and you put the Philistines into untimely graves! When David moves to the fight, God being with him, off comes Goliath’s head! Neither champions’ heads, nor demons’ helmets can stand against the man of God! “The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

“Oh, but,” they say, “Paul *may* plant and Apollos *may* water,” and yet nothing may come of it, for only *God* can give the increase. Where is that in the Bible? It is not there at all! The pure word is set to another key. According to the Scriptures the text runs, “I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.” When believing people work and follow up the work of the one, with the service of the other—working together in sacred unity—then God gives the increase. It is not, “Paul *may* plant and Apollos *may* water,” and they *may* do this in confidence in God, yet they may be disappointed. Not at all! It is not the Lord that is ever in question—*we* are the questionable! God is never late, though we often are. Do not say, “David may go with his sling and David may go with his stone.” No, but if David goes with his sling and stone, in the name of the Lord of Hosts, nothing can defend Goliath’s forehead! He is bound to fall on his face to the earth. If you and I will go in the name of the Lord God of Hosts to do what He calls us to do, our work shall be done.

We shall not invoke that sacred name in vain, nor shall we be guarded and belted about with the Divine Omnipotence and, after all, make a failure of life. That is a happy confidence in God which clearly sees the blending of the human with the Divine—the human *nothing* as to self-

confidence, the Divine *everything* as to the glory—yet the Divine the more Divine, because it condescendingly stoops to use the human!

III. Thirdly, I want you to notice that in David's confidence, *he had so practically observed the service of the human side that he speaks of it, first.* Concerning his experience, David says, first, "Your servant slew both the lion and the bear." In fact, he begins not with what *God* did, but with what he, himself, did. Hear him—"Your servant kept his father's sheep and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him." David does not conceal the fact that he had given both lion and bear their due. There is neither modesty, humility, nor truthfulness in giving the lie to the Grace of God within you. A holy act should not be repudiated by its author any more than a brave boy should be disowned by his father.

If you worked valiantly by the help of the Spirit of God, you did it, and should not refuse to say so. How are you to glorify God by denying the fruit of His Spirit? It is the Glory of God that He led you to holy labor and helped you in it. And though you would not speak to your own honor, yet the Lord must be praised—praised out of the weakness and unworthiness of our human nature. David speaks of the human side, first, because Saul had said to him, "You are not able to go against this Philistine." In effect, David replied, "Hear what I did, and see whether I am not able to meet the case." Sometimes when the question is asked, "Is this possible?" let the Lord's anointed one say, "Yes, for I have done it myself." In a slothful Church, a Church that has no faith in God—and there are many such—the question is asked, "Can this be done—done by such poor creatures as we are?" It is not an ill thing if one who has had experience of the Lord's power bears a bold testimony and says, "This *can* be done, for in days gone by I did the same." What is needed is to give facts and dates and get into the region of reality!

David put the human into the very forefront. I wish you would remember this when you hear the idle night-birds hooting at our working for the Lord. The lazy-bones of our orthodox churches cry, "God will do His own work"—and then they look for the softest pillow they can find and put it under their heads and say, "The eternal purposes will be carried out—God will be glorified." That is all very fine talk, but it can be used with the most mischievous design. You can make opium out of it which will lull you into a deep and dreadful slumber—and prevent your being of any kind of use at all. God delivers David and Israel, and slays Goliath—but David is also there in full force—and nothing is done without his sling and stone. David does not hesitate to state it and the Holy Spirit does not hesitate to record it—why should it be otherwise? Personal action—keep that always before your reverent eyes. Every man has his own place to fill. Fill yours. There is something for you to do. By God's Grace, do it!

IV. But now again, although David thus speaks of the human, first, yet *he speaks of the Divine most.* "No, you say—he does not speak of the Divine the most—there are several verses about the human and we have only *one* upon the Divine." Listen! All the points which David makes con-

cerning the human are about the Divine, too, for when a man who has faith in God speaks, if he says, "I did this, I did that"—it is but another and, sometimes, a braver way of saying that God did it! Of course, we all believe in miracles and that God can do anything and everything. But listen—we do not believe in God using such poor creatures as we are, though that would be the greatest miracle—and the most astonishing marvel! It would be a marvelous thing, indeed, if at any time one of us would cry, "I did it! I did it! The Lord has worked through such a creature as I am." It is a solemn pleasure to feel that the ever-blessed Lord has used you for His praise.

I have felt it to be a joy too great for words and I have bowed my head to worship under a sense of so high an honor. Be not slow to see the hand of the Lord working with you and by you. It may sometimes be more practically useful to Believers to hear of what God did *by* you than to hear abstractly of what God has done by His own bare arm. It redounds more to God's Glory that He has worked acts of Grace by such poor creatures as we are than if He had worked them by seraphim and cherubim. Not without men does God aim at His highest Glory, or else they would not have been created. But in men and by men will the Lord be great to the ends of the earth.

V. Now I want to go a little farther and show that *David's confidence rested mainly in the Immutability of God, the Divine Worker*. He says, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." In the Divine Character there are usual features and ordinary lines of action. God has "ways." He does not behave in one manner, today, and in another tomorrow, but His tones and methods are fixed. Our God is not capricious—we know what to expect from Him, for He has revealed to us "the way of the Lord." All through the Bible you read of God's way. Therefore, when certain events happen, we know where they will end. From experience of the past, we gather prophecies of the future and we foretell things to come.

Let me show you a few objects in conjunction—and let us take observations. Look! Before my mind's eye there pass a lion and a believing man—God gives that believing man victory over the lion. Study the second picture—A bear and a believing man. God helps that believing man to get the victory over the bear. God, who is the same today, as yesterday, will be the same tomorrow. A third picture is before me—a huge giant and the same believing man—well, God will give him victory over the Philistine. I am sure of it. It is His way! I want you, my dear Brother, to feel that if God has blessed you in the past, He will bless you still! You were helped—you can never forget it—you were helped right through. It was a severe crisis in your life and you were wonderfully carried over it. Does not this fact fill you with hope?

There came another somewhat different trial, as different from the former trouble as a bear may be from a lion, but you were again helped—very remarkably helped. You have not forgotten it—you cannot forget it though your hair is gray. Are not such encouragements very many and very sweet? Why, I can furnish my whole house with the bears' skins and lions' skins! Are we going to be discouraged, now? Here is another crisis

and there is another difficulty—are you dismayed? The way of God—have you not learned it, yet? Do you not know God’s habits by now? If He helped you, then, and then, and then, and then—He will surely help you now! Why, you must feel, I should think, like Drake, when he had been round the world and yet was nearly wrecked at the harbor’s mouth! He was coming up the Thames when a fierce storm broke over him and his ship was well-near driven on shore!

He cried to his sailors, “No, no, this won’t do! We have been safely round the world and we are *not* going to be drowned in a ditch like this! We shall get safe up to London.” Your present affliction is a mere ditch of a trouble compared with what you endured years ago! You who have breasted Atlantic billows—are you doomed to drown under the languid ripples of an everyday life? Let it not be so! “Your servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them. The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.”

We serve an immutable God! We change a thousand times a day, but He never changes! Our pilgrimage leads us along a good old way! Our chart and our compass are the same as those of our youth—and the Divine consolation, upon which alone we rely is, in every respect, unaltered and unalterable! Hear Jehovah speak—“I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

VI. This leads me to close by observing that *David’s confidence also proceeded upon his firm conviction that, the Immutable God being with him, he, himself, would be sufficient for the present emergency.* Now, you see, I bring the *man* in again, but it is that you may think of God all the more! We want immutability applied to ourselves, or we are not comforted. It is a very easy thing to say, “Yes, God is unchangeable,” and then we turn round and say—“God is glorious, but I am such a poor creature.” Yes, and you were such a poor creature when you slew the lion—and just such a poor creature when you slew the bear! If you are still such a poor creature, it is probable that by such a poor creature God is going to get to Himself one more victory to the Glory of His great Grace!

Does it ever come over you, who are getting into years, to tremble at times? To tremble involuntarily, with a sore sense of utter nothingness? Your trembling is partly physical weakness and partly mental weariness. You say, “For what God has helped me to do, to His name be praise!” But you go on to enquire, “Can I continue under so great a pressure? Shall I do this present deed and bear this present burden which my Lord has laid upon me?” Why, dear Friend, of *course* you will! What you have done before, you will do again—and greater things than these will you do! I want you to unite with David in a sense of personal capacity for all the outlying future. Not only say, “The Lord who delivered me will deliver me,” but say, also, “Your servant slew both the lion and the bear and your servant can slay this Philistine, too. Yes, I killed the beasts and, in God’s name, I will kill the champion.”

Old battles lend us new weapons. Yesterday’s griefs are the mothers of today’s joys. An old affliction may prove to be the best cure for new distress. Poor, poor Mary! She weeps for Lazarus, but Jesus will comfort her

concerning her brother. Are not His former mercies laid up in store in her soul? Her heart had known secret passages of gracious experience which prepared her to see her brother rise again. And you, poor Thomas, beginning to doubt—why, Thomas, you are the very man who lost estate and health—and yet glorified God! Oh, Brother Thomas, we shall not believe your hard speeches against yourself! You are the man who bore the brunt of poverty, slander, persecution, bereavement and sickness—and you triumphed in them all!

You sometimes tell other people how wonderfully, when you were in the fire, Another walked with you amid the glowing coals. And have you not, sometimes, said that your afflictions are among your most precious possessions? Well, and God will bless you still! It shall not only be the same God, but it shall be the same Mary and the same Thomas still working as God would have them work—and bearing up under trials—and proving themselves to be more than conquerors through Him that loved them.

“Ah, you do not know my trouble, dear Sir!” No, my dear Friend, and you do not know mine—and I am not going to tell you. It would not comfort you if I told you my distresses and it certainly would not comfort *me* if you told me all your airing, moaning and sighing! I expect that we have each to suffer the best trouble that could have been appointed us. If you had my cross, it would be an unsuitable burden for you. And if I had yours, it would be a grievous load for me. Never let us dream of changing, nor even of *comparing* our different lots—the settlements of Providence are wiser than our fancies! The will of the Lord is better than the wit of man! Let each man choose the cross which God has chosen for him. He knew our weight and how to adapt our burden to our strength. If any good is to come of the rod, it will be a rod that is handled by the Lord in His own way—not under the direction of our daily folly—but under the guidance of His infinite wisdom and prudence.

He knows where each one of us requires to come under discipline. He knows the specific nature of each Believer, even as a careful vinedresser understands the peculiarity of each of his vines. In the season of pruning, the Great Husbandman knows which branch needs cutting off. You cry, “Not so, Lord. Here is a branch lower down! If I must be pruned, cut that off.” The Lord is going to spare that shoot, for it is a fruit-bearing one. But the other which you like so much would only run to wood and so He is going to cut it away. Afflictions sent us according to *our* own desires would not be afflictions, but amusements! The rod applied by the culprit, himself, would not amount to much. I do not know that we would be able to make a wise selection of afflictions even if we had the choice of them. I am afraid that we would be like the soldier who was never pleased by the drummer. When he cried, “Do not hit me so high,” the drummer tried him lower down. But he did not like that any better, for he cried, “Higher! Higher! Don’t cut me in pieces!”

Now, in very truth, our afflictions anywhere, or anyway, are grievous. We would rather escape them altogether and, therefore, it is not left to our choice. But the infinite wisdom of God appoints the affliction and appoints it suitably to the man. I fall back on that fact. David is confident that God is with him. He is confident, also, that he is with God. He is confident that

God has helped him—confident that he was enabled to do valiantly, in years gone by, by Divine help, and that he will do so again. And so he comes forward to meet the present emergency. I do not know for whom my message at this hour may be especially meant. It comes to me ruggedly, but with a good deal of impressiveness. I have an inward conviction that there are some here to whom it is sent—children of God who are placed in positions where it is incumbent upon them to stand out and bear open witness for the Truth of God.

There is little doing for the Master—everybody is cowardly and backward. Awake, you brave! Speak out, speak out, and silence the foe! Like packs of hounds, the proud “thinkers” mouth it against the Lord, but a single fearless voice will quiet the whole kennel of them! Come to the front of the fight, you that are truly men, and the Lord will be with you! Remember how He has helped you in times past and let the God of your salvation be your God forever and ever. Now, I am going to close with a few remarks upon the second head.

DAVID IS A VERY FIT AND WONDERFUL TYPE OF THE GREAT SON OF DAVID, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. If Saul had really believed David—which I am afraid he did not—the story that David told him would have encouraged him to have placed much confidence in the young hero. Any believing man in the camp who really trusted Jehovah, as David did, would have said, “I see in you, young man, one whom God has smiled upon. He has enabled you to slay both a lion and a bear and, therefore, I am assured that you will give a good account of this uncircumcised Philistine before long.” Transfer all this from David to David’s Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, and it comes to this—what He has already done should convince us to believe in Him.

I speak both to saints and sinners for a moment tonight. If you have any doubt about whether Jesus Christ is able and willing to help you in your present trouble—and to deliver you from your present doubt, dependency and despair—remember what He has already done! He has left the thrones and royalties of Heaven to be born into this world as a Babe and to hang upon a woman’s breast. It is a marvel! We speak of it as though we understood it, but we do not. The Incarnation is a miracle among miracles and rises like an Alp above all other mountains of mystery! It is a wondrous thing that the One Almighty God should veil Himself in a human form, but Christ has done so. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth.” Being found in fashion as a man, our Lord bowed Himself to learn obedience by the things which He suffered. He lived a life of sorrow, temptation, slander and reproach, that He might finish the work entrusted to Him.

In nothing, failing, He fulfilled the obedient life and prepared for the atoning death. The time came for Him to encounter greater foes than He had met before, but this did not disturb Him. Calmly He met all things as they were appointed Him. He came, at last, to His Cross, and there the stupendous load of human guilt was laid upon His shoulders and He bore it all! As in righteousness He was strong to labor, so in atonement He was strong to suffer. It needed Deity to bear the weight of human guilt, but He

did bear it and He so bore it that He finished transgression and made an end of sins—and made reconciliation for iniquity—and brought in everlasting righteousness for His people. You see, He slew each lion and bear as it came, and in nothing was He dismayed. Then He went down into the grave, met with death and grappled with it. Death, by dying, He destroyed. He rifled the sepulcher and brought resurrection to light for all His people!

Wondrous was that battle of Christ with the lion of the Pit for our sakes! He kept His flocks by night and by day, never failing to protect His own. The lion prowled around and sought to enter the sheepfold, but the Shepherd's watchfulness was always there to keep him off. At last, with a tremendous roar, the monster leaped into the sheepfold. He had hoped that all were slumbering, but Divine love never sleeps. The Shepherd received him on His breast and held him aloft till He had strangled him. As Samson tore the lion of old, so did our Good Shepherd destroy the destroyer when He laid down His life for the sheep.

All this is done and finished—and you may trust our Divine Immanuel to do all that remains. Nothing remains to be done for a sinner that is at all comparable to the far greater things which have been already done. Infinitely more has been worked *for* and *in* a child of God than he will ever need between now and Heaven. He may trust Jesus for that little remainder, if any remainder there is, since so much has been already achieved. As I see our great David going forward, now, to meet any lion that lurks in the way against His people, or any Goliath that stalks abroad and defies the host of God, I feel perfect confidence that He who slew the lion and the bear will make sure work of all that is yet to arise!

Dear Friends, at the present time we may be comforted, whatever our adversary may be, by the full conviction that there is as much necessity for Christ to meet our present adversary as for Him to meet the former ones. David slew the lion and the bear—it was necessary that they should be slain. When the time came, it was equally necessary that Goliath of Gath should be slain. And so, today, if your sin has been removed by Christ, one great necessity has been supplied. If you have now been brought to a dead halt, another necessity has arisen—and another supply will be forthcoming! Our Lord never fails to do everything that is necessary for His people! He never has bungled anything, yet, and He never will. He will not fail nor be discouraged till the Eternal purpose is fulfilled and the blood-bought ones are safe at the right hand of God, even the Father. Comfort yourself with that full conviction.

I believe, also, that an imperious necessity to work rests upon the heart of Christ, now, even as it did before. Our ever sympathetic, ever immutable Lord, has the same power at this moment with which to meet the renewed necessities of His Beloved. Power? He has infinite power! If when He were here in *weakness*, He destroyed sin and death and Hell, what will He not do, now that all power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth? Oh, my Soul, how delightful it is to plunge into a bath of faith and rest in Jesus! Not trust Christ? Not trust Christ, Sinner, now that He is at the right hand of God? Why, His children of old trusted Him when He was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief! Not trust Him at whose belt swing the keys of Heaven and death and Hell? Not trust Him whose very

wish is Law throughout all worlds that God has made? Be gone, O base suggestion! Oh, come and trust Him, whatever the difficulty! Trust Him over the head of Goliath, for He has already slain both the lion and the bear!

It comes to this, that we must go forward against everything that stalks before us in opposition, for there can be no reason why Christ should not overcome it, since He has overcome all that has gone before. I know that we are always apt to think that our present trial is peculiar and surprising—but there are no surprises with Jesus. He foreknew all that would happen to His people before He undertook to save them. He shed not His blood in the dark—He knew what they would be. If they wander and fall into sin, He foreknew it all—and all hardness of heart and everything else that we lament and deplore. Jesus saw it all and made provision to save us “notwithstanding all.” All that can interpose between us and Heaven, Jesus can drive away, even as the shadows flit before the sunlight. All has been foreseen and steadfast love is resolved to see the business through.

Our great redeeming Substitute did not pledge His name as our Surety without counting the cost. Nor did He enter upon Covenant engagements blindly, as silly men too often do. He knew that it would cost Him His own heart’s blood, but He drew not back! He knew what power would be requisite for the achievement of His purpose and He was not daunted. He has undertaken and He will go through with it! As the Lord lives, Christ will suffer no defeat. You have not to do, today, with a puny mortal man that can be put aside and huffed—and made to fear and turn His back! You have to do with a *greater* than David—and if David resolutely ran to meet his foe and paused not till he came back with his gory head, a grizzly trophy of his courage—you need not be afraid that Christ will return defeated! He has taken up this glove and He will fight this battle through.

He will have the victory all along the line and when the last great “Hallelujah” goes up to Heaven, there will be no laments to mingle with it! Neither will Christ have to put away His escutcheon with a sinister bar upon it because He was in part defeated. Never! “The Lord reigns!” The Breaker has gone up before us and the King at the head of us. We shall march through, even to the dividing of the spoil! He has led captivity captive and we shall triumph through His name if we are resting in Him. Oh, that you would trust Him—you that do not as yet rely upon Him! May His great Spirit bring you to believe in Him, for His name’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Samuel 17.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—84 (SONG II), 73.**

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DAVID'S FIRST VICTORY

NO. 2913

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1904.

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

***“So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone,
and smote the Philistine and slew him, but there was no sword
in the hand of David.”
1 Samuel 17:50.***

A CAREFUL reading of the whole chapter will well repay your pains. I have selected a verse for convenience, but I need the entire narrative for a text. If you are well versed in the history, we shall have no need of any preface or translation. So we shall proceed at once to regard David in his conflict with Goliath and his victory over him, first, as *a type of our Lord Jesus Christ*. And, secondly, as *an example for ourselves*. As that which is a type of the head always bears a relationship to the members and, as the members of Christ's mystical body now are and shall yet more fully be like Him, it is but one thought, after all, that we shall be following out in the meditation that lies before us.

I. Let us begin by calling your attention to the fact that David in this matter WAS A TYPE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

The early fathers of the Church were very great in opening up typical analogies. So full, indeed, were they in their expositions and so minute in their details, that at length they went too far and degenerated into trifling. Origen, for example, very notably exceeded what can be regarded as wise interpretation in giving spiritual meanings to literal records. And others who essayed to go yet farther than that great master of mysticism, very soon did much damage to the Church of God, bringing precious Truths of God into serious discredit. The study of the types of the Old Testament has scarcely regained its proper place in the Christian Church since the days in which those gracious men, by their imprudent zeal, perverted it. We cannot, however, bring ourselves to think that a good thing ceases to be good because it has, at some time, been turned to an ill account. We think it can still be used properly and profitably. Within certain limits, then—limits, we suppose, which there is little danger of transgressing in these mechanical, dry times—the types and the allegories of Holy Scripture may be used as a handbook of instruction—a *vade mecum* of sound Doctrine.

By the common consent of Evangelical Christians, David is seen to be an eminent type of the Lord Jesus Christ. With regard to this particular

transaction let us note, at the outset, that before he fought with Goliath, David was anointed of God. Samuel had gone down to Bethlehem and poured a horn of oil upon his head. The parallel will readily occur to you. Thus has the Lord found out for Himself one whom He has chosen out of the people. With His holy oil has He anointed him. Upon Saul's head a small amount of oil was poured—upon David's head a full horn of oil. This may, perhaps, be designed to contrast the brevity and scant renown of Saul's reign with the length, power and excellence of the reign of David. Or, being interpreted *spiritually*, it may denote that the Law, the old Judaism of which Saul is the type, had but a limited measure of blessing, while that of the Gospel, which David represents, is characterized by its abounding fullness. Jesus, the antitype of David, is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows! Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ. The Spirit was not given by measure to Him.

David was anointed several times. He was anointed, as you read in the chapter preceding our text, "in the midst of his brethren"—anointed, as you find in 2 Samuel 2:4, by his brethren, the men of Judah—and anointed again, as you will observe in 2 Samuel 5:3, by all the elders of Israel. We will not go into that, now, but it will suffice us to note that our Lord was anointed of God, is anointed of His saints and shall be anointed of the whole Church. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him and it was in the power of that Spirit with which He was anointed of the Father, that He went forth to fight the great battles of His Church. At His Baptism, coming up out of the Jordan, He was anointed by the Spirit as it rested upon Him, descending out of Heaven like a dove—and straightway He went, as He was driven into the wilderness, and held that notable forty-days' conflict with the arch-fiend, the great adversary of souls! His battles were in the spirit and power of the Highest, for the might and majesty of the Eternal Spirit rested upon Him.

See how the correspondence goes on. Our Lord was sent by His Father to His brethren. As David was sent by Jesse to his brethren with suitable presents and comfortable words in order to commune with them, even so, in the fullness of time, was our Lord commissioned to visit His brethren. He remained concealed for a while in the house of His reputed father, but afterwards He came forth and was distinctly recognized as the Sent One of God, bearing countless gifts in His hands, coming on an mission of mercy and of love from God to those whom He was not ashamed to call His brethren. We have read how David was treated. His brethren did not receive him lovingly. They answered his unaffected kindness with unprovoked rudeness—they laid bitter things to his charge. How truly does this answer to the manner in which our Lord, the Son of David, was abused! He came unto His own and His own received Him not. Though He came to them with words of tenderness, they replied to Him with words of scorn. For His blessings they gave Him curses. For the bread of Heaven they gave Him stones and for the benedictions of Heaven they gave Him the spite of earth, the maledictions of Hell!

Never was a brother, "the first-born among many brethren," so ill-used by the rest of the household! Surely that parable of the wicked husbandmen was fulfilled toward Him. We know it is written that the owner of the vineyard said, "They will reverence my son," but, contrariwise, they said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." Jesus was roughly handled by His brethren whom He came to bless. David, you will remember, answered his brethren with great gentleness. He did not return railing for railing, but with much gentleness he endured their churlishness. In this he supplied us with but a faint picture of our beloved Master, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again. "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself." His only reply, even to the strokes which were to effect His death, was, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." "We hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised and we esteemed Him not." Yet for all that, no word of anger dropped from His lips. He might have said, "Is there not a cause?" He spoke little, however, in His own defense. Rather He went about His life-work as zealously as if all who saw Him had approved of Him. So David, being thus rejected of his brethren, became a type of Christ.

We pass on to observe that David was moved by an intense love of his people. He saw them defied by the Philistines. As he marked how they were crushed in spirit before their formidable enemies, a fervent indignation stirred his soul, but when he heard the terms of defiance, he felt that the God of Israel, Himself, was compromised in this quarrel. The name of Jehovah was dishonored! That braggart giant who stalked before the hosts defied the armies of the living God! No wonder that the warm and devout heart of the brave young shepherd was moved with a mighty heaving! The passion of a warrior kindled in his breast at the sound of that profane voice of the uncircumcised Philistine who could trifle with the honor of Jehovah, the God of Heaven and of earth! A further motive was present to stimulate his patriotic ambition. How could David's bosom fail to glow with strong emotion when he was told that the man who would vanquish and slay that Philistine should be married to the king's daughter? Such a prize might well quicken his ardor. And with all these motives acting upon him, his determination to go forth and do battle with the champion of Philistia was prompt and resolute.

Now in all this he plainly foreshadowed our Lord Jesus Christ. He loved His own—He was always ready to lay down His life for the sheep. But He loved His Father. "Know you not," He had said of old, "that I must be about My Father's business?" "The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up." And then there was the joy that was set before Him that He should have the Church for His spouse—that at the peril, not to say the price of His life, He should obtain her—that He should see of the travail of His soul in her and should be satisfied. She was to be lifted up to His royalties and to share His crown and throne. The New Jerusalem, the mother of us all, was to be unto Jesus the gift of God as His reward! And this inspired Him, so he went forth and entered upon the battle for our sakes.

Let us pause and bless His name that He ever should have loved the people and that the saints should have been in His hands! Let us bless Him that the zeal of God's house did eat Him up—that He consecrated Himself so fully to the great enterprise! Above all, let us humbly and gratefully bless Him that He loved us and gave Himself for us. As a part of His Church whom He had betrothed unto Himself forever, we are part-takers in all that He did! It was for us that He fought the fight, for us He won the victory, for us He has gone to Glory. And He will come, by-and-by, to take us up to behold that Glory and be with Him where He is. While we see the type in David, let us take care not to forget to adore Jesus, Himself, who is here mirrored forth to our minds in the achievement of our salvation.

I might, indeed, instance many further details in which David yet further became a type of our Lord. The whole narrative being full of minute particulars supplies us copiously with points of analogy. But there is one thing I would have you specially observe.

Goliath is called, in the Hebrew, not "champion," as we read it in the English, but the *middleman*, the *mediator*. If you put the whole case fairly before your own minds, you will readily see the fitness of the word that is used. There is the host of the Philistines on the one side and there is the host of Israel on the other side. A valley lies between them. Goliath says, "I will represent Philistia. I stand as the middleman. Instead of all the rank and file coming forth personally to the fight, I appear as the representative of my nation—the mediator. Choose you a mediator who will come and contend with me. Instead of the battle being between the individuals of which the respective armies are composed, let two representative men decide in, duel to the death, the question in debate." Now, it is exactly upon that ground that the Lord Jesus Christ fought the battles of His people. We fell representatively in the first Adam, and our salvation is now by another Representative—the Second Adam. He is the Middleman, the "one Mediator between God and men." In His love to us and His zeal for the Glory of God, we may view Him as stepping forward into the midst of the arena which divides the camps of good and of evil, of God and of the devil—and there facing the defiant adversary—He stands to contend in our name and on our behalf if we are, indeed, His people, that He may decide for us the quarrel which never could have been decided by us. Personally, we should, beyond a doubt, have been put to the rout. But His one single arm is enough to win the victory for us and forever to end the conflicts between Heaven and Hell!

Mark well our warrior chief as He goes forth to the fight. The son of Jesse rejected the weapons with which Saul sought to arm him—he put the helmet on his head, the mail about his body and was about to gird the sword upon his loins, but he said, "I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them." In like manner the Son of David renounced all earthly armor. They would have taken our Lord by force and made Him a king, but He said, "My Kingdom is not of this world." Swords enough would have leaped from their scabbards at His bidding! It was not only Peter

whose too-hasty sword smote the ear of Malchus, but there were many zealots who would have been all too glad to have followed the star of Jesus of Nazareth as in former days. And yet more frequently, in later days, the Jews followed impostors who declared themselves to be commissioned by the Most High for their deliverance. But Jesus said, "Put up again your sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

One of the temptations of the desert was not only that He should have the kingdoms of the world, but that He should have them by the use of such means as Satan would suggest. He must fall down and worship Satan—He must use the carnal weapon which would be tantamount to worshipping him. Jesus would not have it. To this day the great fight of Jesus Christ with the powers of darkness is not with sword and helmet, but with the smooth stones of the brook! The simple preaching of the Gospel, with the shepherd's crook of the great Head of the Church held in our midst—this it is that lays low Goliath and shall lay him low to the last day! Vain is it for the Church even to think that she shall win the victory by wealth, or by rank, or by civil authority! No government will assist her. To the power of God alone she must look. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord of Hosts. Happy will it be for the Church when she learns that lesson! The preaching of the Cross which is "to them that perish foolishness," is, nevertheless, to us who believe Christ, "the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

See, then, our glorious champion going forward to the fray with weapons of his own choosing—and those such as human wisdom despises because they do not appear to be adapted to the work! With great strength and power, nevertheless, did he go forth, for he went in the name of God. "You come to me," said David, "with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts." Such, too, is the predominating influence which renders the Gospel Omnipotent! Christ is God's Propitiation. God has "set Him forth to be a propitiation for sin." Christ is appointed of God, anointed of God, sent of God. And the Gospel is God's message, attended with God's Spirit. If it is not, then it is weak as water—it must fail. But since the Lord has sent it and He has promised to bless it, we may rest assured it will accomplish the ends for which it was ordained. "I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts! "These words might serve as a slogan for all those who are sent of Christ and represent Him in the dread battle for precious souls. This was Christ's watchword when, for our sakes and on our behalf, He came to wrestle with sin, to bear the wrath of God and to vanquish death and Hell! He came in the name of God!

Mark you well that David did smite Goliath and he smote him effectually not in the loins, or on the hand, or on the foot—but in a vital point he delivered the stroke that laid him low. He smote him on the brow of his presumption, on the forehead of his pride! I suppose he had lifted up his visor to take a look at his contemptible adversary, when the stone sank in, which let out forever the boastful soul. So, when our Lord stood

forth to contend with sin, He projected His atoning Sacrifice as a stone that has smitten sin and all its powers upon the forehead. Thus, Glory be to God, sin is slain. It is not merely wounded, but it is slain by the power of Jesus Christ!

And remember that David cut off Goliath's head with his own sword. Augustine, in his comment on this passage, very well brings out the thought that the triumph of our Savior Jesus Christ is here set forth in the history of David. He, "through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." "He death by dying slew"—cut off the giant's head with his own sword. The Cross that was meant to be the death of the Savior was the death of sin! The Crucifixion of Jesus, which was supposed to be the victory of Satan, was the consummation of His victory over Satan! Lo, this day I see, in our conquering Hero's hand, the grizzly head of the monster, Sin, all dripping with gouts of gore! Look at it, you that once were under its tyranny! Look at the terrible lineaments of that hideous and gigantic tyrant! Your Lord has slain your foe! Your sins are dead—He has destroyed them! His own arm, single-handed and alone, has destroyed your gigantic enemy! "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Blessed and magnified be His holy name!

And when David had thus achieved the death of Goliath, he was met by the maidens of Israel who came forth and sang in responsive verse, accompanied with the music of their timbrels and joyous dancing, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." So he had his triumph. Meanwhile, the hosts of Israel, seeing that the Philistine giant was dead, took heart and dashed upon the adversary. The Philistines were frightened and fled, and every Israelite that day became a victor through the victory of David. They were more than conquerors, through him that had loved them and won the victory for them. So let us now think ourselves to be victors. Our Lord has won the victory. He is gone to His Glory. The angels have met Him on the way. They have said, "Lift up your heads, O you gates, even lift them up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." And they that have been with Him have answered to the question, "Who is this King of Glory?" They have said, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory."

And this day the feeblest Believer triumphs in Christ! Though we should have been beaten, nor could we have hoped for victory—yet now through Jesus Christ our Lord, we chase our enemies! We trample sin under our feet and we go from strength to strength through His completed victory. There is much for you to think of here. Will you think this over for yourselves? It is better I should not do all the thinking for you. You will find the analogy capable of much amplification. I have given you only, as it were, a sort of charcoal outline—a rough draft. Make a picture of it at your leisure and it may prove a beneficial study and a profitable meditation.

II. With much brevity let us now revert to David as AN EXAMPLE FOR EVERY BELIEVER IN CHRIST.

Above all things, it behooves us, dear Brothers and Sisters, to consider that if we are ever to do anything for God and for His Church we must be anointed with holy oil. Oh, how vain it would be for us to grow zealous with a sort of creature carnal fanaticism and to attempt great things in sheer presumption which can only issue in utter failure! Unless the Spirit of God is upon us, we have no might from within and no means from without to rely upon. Wait upon the Lord, Beloved, and seek strength from Him alone! There cannot come out of you what has not been put into you. You must receive and then give out. Remember how the Lord Jesus describes it—"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." And again, in another place, "He that believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

You cannot do David's work if you have not David's anointing! When you remember that your Divine Master tarried for the heavenly anointing, you can hardly expect to do without it! Be not so foolish. Christ went not to His public ministrations till the Spirit of God rested upon Him. The Apostles tarried at Jerusalem and went not forth to preach till power were given to them from on high. The point, the pre-requisite, the *sine qua non* with us, is to have that power. Oh, to preach in that power—to pray in that power—to look after wandering souls in that power! Your Sunday school work, your home missionary work, your evening form of ministry for Christ must be done in that power! Get to your knees! Get to the Cross! Get to your Master's feet! Sit still in faith and hope until He shall have given you the strength that shall qualify you to do the Master's work, in the Master's way, to the Master's praise!

David, too, stands before us as an example of the fact that our opportunity will come if our efficiency has been bestowed, without our being very particular to seek it. David fell into position. The place he was fitted to occupy, he was Providentially called to fill as a great man in Israel. Little did he guess, when he went with the load of bread, and corn, and cheese, that he was, before long, to be distinguished beyond all other men in Palestine! Yes it was so. Beloved, do not be in a hurry to look out for your sphere. Be ready for your sphere—your sphere will come to you. I speak to many dear young Brothers who are studying for the ministry. Be prepared for any work rather than be looking out for some particular work. God has His niche for you. You will land on your feet—depend upon that. Be ready. Your business is to be ready. Have your tools well sharpened and know how to handle them. The place will come to you, the best place for you, if you are not so much looking after that which meets your taste, as after that which proves you to be a vessel fit for the Master's use! David finds his occasion. He has received the Spirit, first, which is the main thing—and then he has found the occasion which calls out his credentials.

I gather from David's example that when we feel a call to do something for God and for His Church, we need not wait until those whom we hold in respect coincide with us as to the propriety of entering upon the service. Had David said—"Well, I shall wait till Eliab, Abinadab and Shammah, my elder brothers, are all perfectly agreed that I am the man to fight Goliath"—I suspect he would never have fought with Goliath at all! Great deference is due to the judgment of our seniors, but greater respect is due to the motions of the Spirit of God within our heart. I would to God there were more regard shown for those inward monitions among Christians than there is known to be in these times. If you have a thought put into your heart, or a charge laid upon your conscience, obey it, man! Act up to it, though no one else perceives it or encourages you. If God has shown you His counsel, at your peril hide the presage or shrink from the performance! What? With the fear of God in our hearts and a commission from God in our hands, shall we halt and hesitate and become the servants of *men*? I would rather die than have to come into this pulpit to ask your leave, or to get any man's consent as to what I shall preach!

God speaks, by His Spirit, what He has to say to me and, by the help of His good Spirit, I will deliver it to you as I hear it from Him. May this tongue be silent before it becomes the servant of man! David was of that mind. He felt he had something to do and though he could listen to what other people had to say, yet they were no masters of his. He served the living God and he went about the business entrusted to him undaunted by any judgment they might form of him. He that speaks for God should speak honestly. Let others criticize and sift the chaff from the wheat. He must expect that. But as for himself, let him give out that pure wheat as he believes it to be and fear no man, lest he comes under the condemnation of the God of Heaven! Go, my Brother, about your business, if God gives it to you to do. If I upbraid you, what of that? I am but a man. Or if all those in whose good esteem you would gladly stand, turn upon you with hard suspicions and cutting censures, they are but men and to God alone is your allegiance due! Go about your Master's work as David did, with dauntless nerve but modest demeanor. He would be an evil servant who, after once getting His Master's orders, should leave them unperformed and excuse himself by saying, "I met one of my fellow servants and he said he thought I might be too bold in my adventure and, therefore, I had better not attempt it." To your own Master you will stand or fall! Take care that you stand well with Him!

Learn from David, too, to return quiet answers to those who would roughly put you aside from your work. Generally it is better to return no answer at all. I think David spoke not so well by word as by deed. His conduct was more eloquent than his language. As he came back from the fight, holding up the giant's head, I could hope that Eliab saw him and that Abinadab and Shammah came out to meet him. If they did, he might simply have held up the trophy and allowed its ghastly visage to reply for him. It is not, they would think, after all, because of his pride or

the evil of his heart, or from an idle curiosity to see the battle that he has come. They would perceive that he had come to do God's work in his own way—that God had helped him to gain the victory, rout the foe and relieve the fears of Israel—and that through the man whom they despised the Lord had made His own name glorious!

Learn again, from David's example, the prudence of keeping to tried weapons. I have often heard it spoken of as an unlikely thing that David could kill the giant with a stone. I think those who talk so miss the point. What missile could be handier or better suited for the occasion? If the fellow was tall, a sling would carry a stone high enough to reach him. And if he was strong, very strong, the sling would give such impetus to the stone that David could assail his adversary without getting within his reach. It was the best weapon he could have used. Oriental shepherds, if those of olden time were like those of modern days, had practice enough to make them proficient in slinging stones. They spend many hours both alone and with their fellows over feats of the sling. It is generally their best weapon for the protection of their sheep in the vast solitudes. I do not doubt that David had learned to sling a stone to a hair's breadth and not miss. As for the sword, he had never had one in his life, for there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan, save that which was found with Saul and Jonathan, his son. We are told as much as that in the 13th Chapter. The Philistines had so completely disarmed the whole populace that they had not got any such weapons. With the use of them, therefore, David could not have been familiar. And as to the coat of mail—a cumbersome, uneasy, comfortless equipment—the wonder to me is how the knights of old did anything at all in such accoutrements! No marvel that David put the thing off. He felt most at ease in his own shepherd's garb.

Of course we are not going to infer that unsuitable instruments are desirable. We teach nothing so romantic or absurd! It well becomes us to use the most suitable tools we can find. As for those stones out of the brook, David did not pick them up at hazard—he carefully chose them, selecting smooth stones that would exactly fit in his sling—the kind of stone he thought best fitted for his purpose. Nor did he trust in his sling. He tells us he trusted in God, but he went to work with his sling as if he felt the responsibility to be his own. To miss the mark would prove his own clumsiness—to hit his target would be of God's enabling. Such, my Brothers and Sisters, is the true philosophy of a Christian's life. You are to do good works as zealously as if you were to be saved by your good works—and you are to trust in the merits of Christ as though you had done nothing at all! So, too, in the service of God, though you are to work for God as if the fulfillment of your mission rested with yourselves, you must clearly understand and steadfastly believe that, after all, the whole matter, from first to last, rests with God! Without Him, all you have ever planned or performed is unavailing.

That was sound philosophy of Mahomet's when the man said, "I have turned my camel loose and trusted in Providence." "No," answered he,

“tie your camel up and then trust in Providence.” Do the best you can and trust in God. God never meant that faith in Him should be synonymous with sloth. Why, for the matter of that, if it is all God’s work and that is to be the only consideration, there is no need for David to have a sling! No, there is not any need for David at all. He may go back, lie on his back in the middle of the field, and say, “God will do His work—He does not need me.” That is how fatalists would talk, but not how Believers in God would act! They say, “God wills it, therefore I am going to do it”—not, “God does it and, therefore, there is nothing for me to do.” No, “Because God works by me, therefore I will work by His good hand upon me. He is putting strength into His feeble servant and making use of me as His instrument, good for nothing though I am apart from Him. Now will I run to the battle with confidence and I will use my sling with the best skill I have, taking quiet, calm, deliberate aim at that monster’s brow since I believe that God will guide the stone and accomplish His own end.”

When you are bent on serving God, give Him your best. Keep not back anything of nerve or muscle, anything of skill or wisdom you can dedicate to the enterprise. Say not, “Anything will do. God can bless my lack as well as my competency.” Doubtless He can, but undoubtedly He will not! Be careful to do your best. David in his old age and his riper experience would not offer to God that which cost him nothing. Do not attempt to render unto God slovenly service and flatter yourselves that he will bless it. *He can bless it*—but that is not the way in which He usually deigns to work. Though He often takes rough tools, He fashions them and polishes them for His use. He can convert rude men into able ministers of the New Testament. Think not, however, that His Grace will excuse your presumption. But go with the instruments you have proved. When any of you working men attempt to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, do not try the fine arguments that are often used to combat infidels. You will never manage them! They will be sure to embarrass you!

Tell your neighbors and friends what you have felt and handled of the Word of Life. Declare to them those things that are written in the Scriptures. These texts are the smooth stones that will suit your sling. Keep to these things. Why, they tell us nowadays, that we ought to take up those arguments which are invented by modern philosophers—examine them, study them—and come forward on the Sabbath and at other times to answer them—that we should use historical research and logical acumen to rebut infidel calumnies! Ah, Saul’s armor does not fit us. They that like it may wear it, but, after all, to preach Christ and Him Crucified—to tell out the old, old story of eternal love and of the blood which sealed it, the manner of Redemption, the Truth of God’s unchangeable Grace—this is to use those stones and that sling which will surely find the forehead of the foe!

Next, observe that from the work which David began, he ceased not till he had finished it. He had laid the giant prone upon the soil, but he was not satisfied till he had cut off his head. I wish that some who work for

Christ would be as thorough as this young volunteer was! Have you taught a child the way of salvation? Do not leave off till that child is enrolled in the fellowship of Believers! Have you faithfully preached the Gospel to any congregation of people? Continue to instruct, counsel and encourage them until you see them established in the faith! Or if you have refuted a heresy, or denounced a vice, follow up the assault until the evil is exterminated! Not only kill the giant, but have his head off! Never do the work of the Lord imperfectly. Never spare, in pity, any device of the devil. Bad habits and besetting sins should be leveled with a decisive blow. But let not that be enough! Give them no chance of recovering their strength. With humble penitence and earnest resolution—in reliance on God and detestation of the foe—see to it that the head shall be taken from the sin as well as the stone sunk in its forehead! In so doing you may look for help you had not reckoned on. You have no sword with you—you have not wanted to cumber yourself with one, even as David had no need to carry a sword in his hand, for Goliath was carrying a sword with him which might well serve for his own execution. Whenever you serve God, you strive against error—and remember that every error carries the sword with which it will be slain!

In maintaining the cause of the Truth of God, we need not be surprised if the fight is long. But we may always count on the pride of the adversary turning to his own hurt. The conflict will be shortened by himself. When the invaders, most of all, relied on the alliances they had formed, it often happened that Israel won the day through the Moabites and the Assyrians falling out among themselves. Very frequently it has been God's plan to let His adversaries turn upon each other and end the fight to His servants' comfort! Behold the giant's head taken off with his own sword! Let it be before your eyes for a sign. It matters not, Brothers, though we should be in the minority on certain eminent matters, as we undoubtedly are. The question for you is, are you right? Are you right? The right is sure to win! Have you the Truth of God on your side? Have you the Bible on your side? Have you Christ on your side? Well, you may belong to a despised community. You may be associated with a very few and a very poor people. Flinch not—let not your heart quail. Had you no strength with which to overcome the adversary excepting that which is promised by God, you have quite enough!

But there lies in ambush, in the camp of your adversary, an assistance and an aid to the Truth of God that you have not, perhaps, thought of. The old dragon stings himself to death! As vice consumes the vitals of the man who indulges in it, so does error, in the long run, become its own destroyer! Full often the Truth of God shines out the more brightly from the very fact that an error has beclouded the world with its dense shadows. Go on, then! Strive with coolness and courage! Be not daunted by the comely face, the princely figure, or the battle array of your antagonist! Let not his vaunting words deter you. Call on the name of Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, and use, even in God's battles, those weapons which you have tested and proved. But take care to go through with

God's work—do it thoroughly, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith—and so, Beloved, you may expect to go from strength to strength and bring glory to God!

I would we were all on the Lord's side—that we were all the soldiers of Christ. Do any here confess that they are not? Are there any of you who feel sin lying heavily upon you and yet you gladly would be at peace with God, in fellowship with Jesus? Beloved, Jesus has never yet rejected one that came to Him! It has never yet been said that His blood was not able to cleanse the vilest soul! Go to Him! You cannot give Him greater joy than by going to Him and confessing your sin and seeking His mercy. He wants to be gracious. He slays sin, but He takes pity on sinners. He is ready to pardon them. He is the enemy of Goliath, but He sits on Zion's hill, glad to welcome the very poorest of the poor that come to Him. If you are the worst sinner that ever lived, He is still able to save to the uttermost! If you have no hope and no confidence—if you feel as though sentence had gone forth that you should die forever, your fears are not due to God's counsels. He has not spoken the bitter things you have imagined against yourself! Give ear to what He has said—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

Oh, to be on Christ's side maintains the heart in calm and inflames the soul with joy, notwithstanding the pain that now tortures your nerves, or the shame that mantles your cheeks! But ah, to be on the other side—to be an enemy of Jesus—is a woe that blights all present joy and promises all future curses! The future, the future, the future! This is the worst of all to be dreaded. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." The Lord give you, every one of you, to be thus timely wise, for His name's sake! Amen.

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

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

WAR! WAR! WAR!

NO. 250

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 1, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Fight the Lord’s battles.”
1 Samuel 18:17.***

WE shall not take these words in their literal application, as coming from the lips of Saul, when he gave David his elder daughter, Marab, to wife. But we shall accommodate the passage and use it as an exhortation given to the Church of Christ and to every Soldier of Jesus—“Fight the Lord’s battles.” If this exhortation is not found in the same words, coming from the lips of Jesus, nevertheless the whole tenor of the Word of God is to the same effect—“Fight the Lord’s battles.”

At the present crisis, the minds of men are exceedingly agitated with direful prospects of a terrible struggle. We know not whereunto this matter may grow. The signs of the times are dark and direful. We fear that the vials of God’s wrath are about to be poured out and that the earth will be deluged with blood. As long as there remains a hope, let us pray for peace, no, even in the time of war let us still beseech the Throne of God, crying, that He would “send us peace in our days.”

The war will be looked upon by different persons with different feelings. The Italian will consider all through the controversy, his own country. The Sardinian will be looking continually to the progress or to the defeat of his own nation—while the German, having sympathy with his own race, will be continually anxious to understand the state of affairs. There is one power however, which is not represented in the congress and which seems to be silent because the ears of men are deaf to anything that it has to say. To that power all our sympathies will be given and our hearts will follow it with interest. And all through the war, the one question that we shall ask, will be, “How will that kingdom prosper?”

You all know to which kingdom I refer—it is the kingdom of Jesus Christ upon earth. That little one which is even at this time growing and which is to become a thousand, which is to break in pieces all the monarchies of earth and to seat itself upon their ruins, proclaiming universal liberty and peace, under the banner of Jesus Christ. I am sure that we shall think far more of the interests of religion than of anything else and our prayer will be, “O Lord, do what You will with the earthen pitchers of men’s monarchies, but let Your kingdom come and let Your will be done on earth, even as it is in Heaven”!

While, however, we shall anxiously watch the contest, it will be quite as well if we mingle in it ourselves. Not that this nation of England should touch it—God forbid. If tyrants fight, let them fight. Let free men stand

aloof. Why should England have anything to do with all the coming battles? As God has cut us off from Europe by a boisterous sea, so let us be kept apart from all the broils and turmoil into which tyrants and their slaves may fall. I speak now, after a *spiritual* manner, to the Church of Christ. I say, "Let us mingle in the fray. Let us have something to do. We cannot be neutral. We never have been. Our host is ever in hostility to sin and Satan. "My voice is still for war." The senate of Christ's Church can never talk of peace. For thus it is written—"The Lord will have war."

This will bring us to the text and here I shall consider first of all, the Lord's battles. We are not to fight our own. Secondly, the Lord's soldiers. And thirdly, the King's command, "Fight the Lord's battles."

I. First, THE LORD'S BATTLES, what are they? Not the garment rolled in blood, not the noise and smoke and din of human slaughter. These may be the *devil's* battles, if you please, but not the Lord's. They may be days of God's vengeance but in their strife the servant of Jesus may not mingle. We stand aloof. Our kingdom is not of this world—else would God's servants fight with sword and spear. Ours is a *spiritual* kingdom and the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual and mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds.

What are God's battles? Let us here carefully distinguish between the battles of God and our own. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, it is not your business to fight your own battles, not even in defense of your own character. If you are maligned and slandered, let the slanderer alone. His malignity will but be increased by any attempt that you shall make to defend yourself. As a soldier of Christ you are to fight for your *Master*, not *for yourself*. You are not to carry on a private warfare for your own honor, but all your time and all your power is to be given to His defense and His war. You are not to have a word to speak for yourselves. Full often, when we get into little tempers and our blood is roused, we are apt to think that we are fighting the cause of the Truth of God when we are really maintaining our own pride. We imagine that we are defending our Master, but we are defending our own little selves. Too often the anger rises against an adversary not because his words reflect dishonor upon the glorious Christ, but because they dishonor us.

Oh, let us not be so little as to fight our own battles! Depend upon it, the noblest means of conquest for a Christian in the matter of calumny and falsehood is to stand still and see the salvation of God. Sheathe your own sword, put away all your own weapons, when you come to fight your own battle and let God fight for you and you shall be more than conqueror.

Again, we must remember that there is such a thing as fighting the battles of our own sect, when we ought to be fighting God's battles. We imagine that we are maintaining the Church when we are only maintaining our section of it. I would always be very tender of the honor of the Christian body to which I belong, but I would rather see its honor stained than that the glory of the entire Church should be dimmed. Every soldier ought to love the peculiar legion in which he has enlisted, but better to see the col-

ors of that legion rent to tatters, than to see the old standard of the Cross trampled in the mire. Now I trust we are ready to say of our own denomination, "Let its name perish, if Christ's name shall get glory thereby."

If the extinction of our sect should be the conquest of Christ and the promoting of His kingdom, then let it be wiped out of the book of record and let not its name be heard any more. We should, I say, each of us, defend the body to which we belong, for we have conscientiously joined it believing it to be the nearest to the old standard of the Church of Christ, and God forbid that we should leave it for a worse. If we see a better, then would we sacrifice our prejudices to our convictions, but we cannot leave the old standard so long as we see it to be the very standard which floated in the hand of Paul and which was handed by him through many generations, through Chrysostom to Augustine, from Augustine to Calvin and so on through the glorious race of mighty men who have not been ashamed of the Gospel of Christ Jesus. But yet I say let our name and let our sect and let our denomination be absorbed and let it sink—so that the battle of the Lord may but be well fought and the time of Christ's triumph hastened.

"Fight the Lord's battles." Then what are these? These are battles with sin and battles with error and battles with war and battles with worldliness. Fight, these, Christian, and you shall have enough to do. The Lord's battles are first of all with sin. Seek grace to fight that battle in your own heart. Endeavor by Divine Grace to overcome those propensities which continually push you towards iniquity. On your knees wrestle against your besetting sins. As habits appear endeavor to break them by the battle-ax of strong resolution wielded by the arm of faith. Take all your lusts, as they bestir themselves, to the foot of the Cross and let the blood of Jesus fall upon those vipers and they must die. The blood of Christ shall spill the blood of sin. The death of Christ shall be the death of iniquity—the Cross of Christ shall be the crucifixion of transgression.

Labor with yourselves to drive the Canaanites out of your hearts. Spare none, let no petty lust escape. Put down pride and sloth and lust and unbelief and you have now a battle before you which may fill your hands and more than fill them. Oh, cry unto God for strength and look unto the hills from where comes your help and then fight on again. And as each sin is overcome, each evil habit broken off, each lust denied—go on to the rooting up of another and the destruction of more of them—until all being subdued, body soul and spirit shall be consecrated to Christ as a living sacrifice, purified by His Holy Spirit.

And while this battle is being fought, yes, and while it is still fighting, go out and fight with other men's sins. Smite them first with the weapon of holy example. Be yourselves what you would have others be. Be clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. Be clean yourselves before you can hope to be the purifiers of the world. And then, having first sought the blessing of God, go out into the world and bear your witness against sin. Let your testimony be unflinching. Never let a sin pass under your eye without rebuke. Slay utterly young and old. Let not one escape. Speak sometimes

sternly if the sinner is hardened in his sin. Speak gently, if it is his first offense, seeking not to break his head but to break the head of his iniquity—not to break his bones or wound his feelings, but to cut his sin in two and leave his iniquity dead before his eyes.

Go forth where sin is the most rampant. Go down the dark alley, climb the creaking staircase. Penetrate the dens of iniquity where the lion of the pit lies in his death lair and go and pluck out of the mouth of the lion two legs and a piece of an ear, if that is all which you can save. Count it always your joy to follow the track of the lion, to beard him in his den and fight him where he reigns most secure. Protest daily, hourly—by act, by word, by pen, by tongue—against evil of every kind and shape. Be as burning and shining light in the midst of darkness and as two-edged swords in the midst of the hosts of sin. Why a true Christian, who lives near to God and is filled with grace and is kept holy, may stand in the midst of sinners and do wonders! What a marvelous feat was that which Jonah did! There was the great city of Nineveh, having in it six score thousand souls that knew not their right hand from their left and one man went against it—Jonah—and as he approached it he began to cry, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” He entered the city—perhaps he stood aghast for a moment at the multitude of its population, at its richness and splendor—but again he lifted up his sharp shrill voice, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.”

On he went and the crowd increased around him as he passed through each street, but they heard nothing but the solemn monotony, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” And yet again, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” And on he went, that solitary man, till he caused convulsion in the midst of myriads and the king on his throne robed himself in sackcloth and proclaimed a fast, a day of mourning and of sadness. Yet on he went, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown,” “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown,” till all the people bowed before him and that one man was the conqueror of the myriad.

Ah, Believer, if only you will go out and do the same. If only you will go into the streets, the lanes, the byways the houses and into the privacies of men and still with this continued cry against sin and iniquity, say to them, “Look unto the Cross and live, look unto the Cross and live.” Though there were but one earnest man in London who would continue that monotony of, “Look unto the Cross and live,” from end to end this city would shake and the great leviathan metropolis would be made to tremble. Go forth then, Believer and cry against sin with all your might.

And even so must we cry against error. It is the preacher’s business, Sabbath after Sabbath, and week-day after week-day, to preach the whole Gospel of God and to vindicate the Truth of God as it is in Jesus from the opposition of man. Thousands are the heresies which now beset the Church. O children of God, fight the Lord’s battles for truth! I am astonished and yet more astonished when I come to turn it over, at the want of earnestness that there is in the Protestantism of the present age. How do you imagine that Cardinal Wiseman pays for all his splendors and that

the Romish Church is supported? Fools and slow of heart, you find them much of their wealth. If he is to preach in any place, who is it that crowds the Chapel full and pays for admission? The Protestants. And the Protestantism of England is the paymaster of the Pope. I am ashamed that sons of the Reformers who have Smithfield still in their midst unbuilt upon, should bow themselves before the beast and give so much as a single farthing to the shrine of the devil's firstborn son.

Take heed to yourselves, you Protestants, lest you be partakers of her plagues. Touch her not, lest you be defiled. Give a drachma to her, or a grain of incense to her censors—you shall be partakers of her adulteries and partakers of her plagues. Every time you pass the house of Popery let a curse light upon her head—thus said the Lord—“Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins and that you receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto Heaven and God has remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you and double unto her double according to her works—in the cup which she has filled fill to her double. How much she has glorified herself and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her. For she said in her heart, I sit a queen and am no widow and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning and famine. And she shall be utterly burned with fire—for strong is the Lord God who judges her” (Rev. 18:4-8).

How soft some men's minds are growing—how effeminate in the battle. I hear then speaking of Puseyism—and what is that but Popery made worse than it was before by being more despicable and deceivable than even Popery itself? Does you not hear men talk of the Puseyites in these days and say, “Ah, well, they differ a little from us.” Do not the evangelical party in the Church of England seem at the present moment to make common cause and party with the Puseyite? Else how is it that the great preaching has been alternatively conducted by High and Low Church? It is all very well with that Church when it is separated from her heretical sons and a great gulf fixed—but all that helps to bridge that gulf must mar her glory and destroy her power. We must have no truce, no treaty with Rome. War! War to the knife with her! Peace there cannot be. She cannot have peace with us—we cannot have peace with her. She hates the true Church and we can only say that the hatred is reciprocated. We would not lay a hand upon her priests. We would not touch a hair of their heads. Let them be free. But their *doctrine* we would destroy from the face of the earth as the doctrine of devils. So let it perish, O God, and let that evil thing become as the fat of lambs. Into smoke let it consume—yes into smoke let it consume away. We must fight the Lords battles against this giant error, whichever shape it takes. And so must we do with every error that pollutes the Church. Slay it utterly. Let none escape. “Fight the Lord's battles.”

Even though it is an error that is in an Evangelical Church, yet must we smite it. I love all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ, but, nevertheless, I cannot have any truce, any treaty with many errors that have crept

into the Church, nor would I have you regard them with complacency. We are one in Christ. Let us be friends with one another. But let us never be friends with one another's error. If I am wrong, rebuke me sternly. I can bear it and bear it cheerfully—and if you are wrong, expect the like measure from me and neither peace nor parley with your mistakes. Let us all be true to one another and true to Christ. And as soon as we perceive an error, though it is but as the shadow of one, let us root it out and drive it from us, lest it plague the whole body and put leprosy into the entire fabric of the Church. No peace with sin. No peace with falsehood. War, war, war without deliberation—war forever with error and deceit!

And yet again—it is the Christian's duty always to have war with war. To have bitterness in our hearts against any man that lives to serve Satan. We must speak very harshly and sternly against error and against sin. But against men we have not a word to say, though it were the Pope himself—I have no enmity in my heart against him as a man, but as anti-Christ. With men the Christian is one. Are we not every man's brother? "God has made of one flesh all people that dwell upon the face of the earth." The cause of Christ is the cause of humanity. We are friends to all and are enemies to none. We do not speak evil, even of the false prophet himself, as a *man*, but as a false prophet—we are his sworn opponents.

Now, Christians, you have a difficult battle to fight, because as you fight with all evil and hostility between man and man—you are to be *peacemakers*. Go wherever you may, if you see a quarrel you are to abate it. You are to pluck firebrands out of the fire and strive to quench them in the waters of loving-kindness. It is your mission to bring the nations together and weld them into one. It is yours to make man love man, to make him no more the devourer of his kind.

This you can only do by being the friends of purity. Peace with error is war with man—but war with error is peace with man. Smite error, smite sin, and you have done your best to promote happiness and union among mankind. Oh, go, Christian, in the Spirit's strength and smite your own anger—put that to the death. Smite your own pride—level that and then smite every other man's anger. Make peace wherever you can—scatter peace with both your hands. Let this be the very air you breathe. Let nothing drop from your lips but words of healing, words of tenderness, words which shall abate the strife and noise of this poor distracted world. And now you have a battle before you—a battle against sin and against error and then, also, a battle against strife—the battle of love.

II. And now FOR THE LORD'S SOLDIERS—who are they that are to fight the Lord's battle? Not everybody. The Lord has His army, His Church—who are they? The Lord's soldiers are all of His own choosing. He has chosen them out of the world. And they are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. But if you want to know the Lord's soldiers, I will tell you how you may ascertain whether you are one. When the Lord Jesus enlists a soldier in His Church, the first thing He does with him is He tells him that he must first take off every rag of the old garments that he was desirous to wear. "Now," said Jesus to him, "your rags must be re-

linquished. Your sins and your self-righteousness must both be forsaken. Here is the regimental, here is the inner garment of My imputed righteousness and here is the outward garment of Divine sanctification. Put on these and you are Mine. But in your own robes I will have nothing to do with you, you shall still continue an heir of wrath and I will not enlist you among the heirs of grace.”

As soon as a man has his rags taken off, Christ has enlisted him. The next thing he is required to do is to wash. He is washed, from head to foot, in a matchless bath of blood. And when washed, he is arrayed and clothed upon with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This done, he is taken into the midst of the army and introduced to his comrades and he is led to love the whole army. “Well,” says one, “I love my own rank.” Do you? Then you do not belong to God’s army if you do not love the other ranks, too. He who is a true soldier of Christ wears His regimentals and he loves the whole army. He keeps to his own regiment and he likes its banner—the flag that has braved so often the battle and the storm. Still he loves the whole army, however much the colors may differ. He loves all them that serve the Lord Jesus Christ. “By this also you shall know whether you are His disciples, if you love one another, even as Christ has loved you.”

Once brought into the army, there is one mark whereby you may know Christ’s soldier, namely, that he is not his own. If you meet him, he will say, “From head to foot I belong to my Captain, every inch of me. And what is more, I have given up goods and chattels, wife and children, time and talents, everything for Him. I am not my own, I am bought with a price.” He is a consecrated man. Come, then, put these questions to yourselves. Have you been washed in the blood of Christ? Do you boast in the imputed righteousness of Christ? And are you clothed about with the sanctification of His Spirit? Have you given up everything for His cause? For the love you bear His name are you willing to live or willing to die, as He shall please, if you may but promote His honor? Well, then, you are His soldier and therefore I shall not need to draw any further lines of distinction. But go to the third point, which is—

III. THE EXHORTATION—“Fight!” “Fight the Lord’s battles.” If you are the soldier of the heavenly King, “To arms! To arms!” “Fight the Lord’s battles.” Here I would observe that there are some people who are very fond of looking on, but not fighting. Perhaps five out of every six of our Churches do little but look on. You go to see them and you say, “Well, what is your Church doing?” “Well, we bless God, we are doing a great deal. We have a Sabbath-School, with so many children. Our minister preaches so many times and so many members have been added to the Churches. The sick are visited. The poor are relieved.” And you stop them and say, “Well, friend, I am glad to hear that you are doing so much. But which work is it that you take? Do you teach in the Sabbath-School?” “No.” “Do you preach in the street?” “No.” “Do you visit the sick?” “No.” “Do you assist in the discipline of the Church?” “No.” “Do you contribute to the poor?” “No.” Yet I thought you said you were doing so much. Stand out, Sir, if you please, you are doing nothing at all. Be ashamed!

Your master does not say, “*Look on* at the Lord’s battles.” But “Fight” them. “Ah,” says one. “but then, you know, I contribute towards the support of the ministers—*he* has to do that.” Oh, I see, you have made a mistake. You thought that you belonged to the English government and not to Christ’s government. You have been paying for a substitute, have you? You are not going to fight in person. You are paying to keep a substitute to fight for you. Ah, you have made a great mistake here. Christ will have *all* his soldiers fight. Why, I am not kept to do the fighting for you. I will endeavor to encourage you and nerve you to the battle. But as to doing your duty, no, I thank you. The Romanist may believe that his priest does the work for him. I do not believe any such thing in my case, nor in the case of your ministers. Christ did not serve you by proxy and you cannot serve Him by proxy. No, “He His own self bare our sins in His own body,” and you must work for Christ in your own body, your own self, with your own heart and with your own hands.

I do hate that religion which another man can do for you. Depend upon it, it is good for nothing. True religion is a personal thing. O Soldiers of the heavenly King, leave not your lieutenants and your officers to fight alone. Come on with us. We wave our swords in front. Come Comrades, on! We are ready to mount the call, or lead the forlorn hope. Will you desert us? Come up the ladder with us. Let us show the enemy what Christian blood can do and at the sword’s point let us drive our foes before us. If you leave us to do all, it will all be undone. We want all to do something, all to be laboring for Christ. Here, then, is the exhortation to each individual Christian—“Fight the Lord’s battles.”

And now, I will read you the code martial—the rules which Christ, the Captain, would have you obey in fighting His battles.

Regulation I.—NO COMMUNICATION NOR UNION WITH THE ENEMY! “You are not of the world.” No truce, no league, no treaty are you to make with the enemies of Christ. Come out from among them and be you separate and touch not the unclean thing.”

Regulation II.—NO QUARTER TO BE GIVEN OR TAKEN! You are not to say to the world, “There! Believe me to be better than I am”—and do not ever believe the world to be better than it is. Do not ask it to excuse you. Do not excuse it. No parley with it whatever. If it praises you, do not care for its praise. If it scorns you laugh in its face. Have nothing to do with its pretended friendship. Ask nothing at its hands. Let it be crucified to you and you to it.

Regulation III.—NO WEAPONS OR AMMUNITION TAKEN FROM THE ENEMY ARE TO BE USED BY IMMANUEL’S SOLDIERS, BUT ARE TO BE UTTERLY BURNED WITH FIRE! If you beat them and you find their guns lying on the ground, spike them and melt them; never fire them off—that is to say, never fight Christ’s battles with the devil’s weapons. If your enemy gets angry do not get angry with him. If he slanders you, do not slander him. One of the devil’s long guns is slander—spike it and melt it—do not attempt to use it against the enemy. All kinds of bitterness—these are firebrands of death which Satan hurls against us—never hurl them back

at him. Remember your Master. "When He was reviled He reviled not again." Never meddle with the enemy's weapons, even if you can. If you think you can crush him by his own mode of warfare, do not do it. It was all very well for David to cut off Goliath's head with his own sword. But it would not have done for him to try that, until he had first of all split his head open with a stone. Try to get a stone out of the brook of truth and throw it with the sling of faith, but have nothing to do with Goliath's sword. You will cut your fingers with it and get no honor.

Regulation IV.—NO FEAR, TREMBLING, OR COWARDICE! "The children of Ephraim, being armed, turned their backs in the day of battles" but Christ wants no cowardice of you. Fear not. Remember, if any man is ashamed of Christ in this generation, of him will Christ be ashamed in the day when He comes in the glory of His Father and all His holy angels. "I say unto you, fear not him that can kill the body, but after that has no more that he can do. But fear Him who is able to cast both body and soul into Hell. I say unto you, fear Him."

Regulation V.—NO SLUMBERING, REST, EASE, OR SURRENDER! Be always at it, all at it, constantly at it, with all your might at it. No rest. Your resting time is to come, in the grave. Be always fighting the enemy. Ask every day for grace to win a victory and each night sleep not unless you can feel that you have done something in the cause of Christ—have helped to carry the standard a little further into the midst of the enemy's ranks. Oh, if we did but attend to these regulations how much might be done! But because we forget them, the cause of Christ is retarded and the victory is afar off.

And now, before I send you away, I would call out Christ's soldiers and drill them for a minute or two. I see sometimes the captains marching their soldiers to and fro and you may laugh and say they are doing nothing. But mark, all that maneuvering, that forming into squares and so forth, has its practical effect when they come into the field of battle. Suffer me, then, to put the Christian through his postures.

The first posture the Christian ought to take and in which he ought to be very well practiced, is this—DOWN UPON BOTH KNEES, HANDS UP, AND EYES UP TO HEAVEN! No posture like that. It is called the posture of prayer. When Christ's Church has been beaten every way else, it has at last taken to its knees and then the whole army of the enemy has fled before us, for on its knees Christ's Church is more than conqueror. The praying legion is a legion of heroes. He who understands this posture has learned the first part of the heavenly drill.

The next posture is—FEET FAST, HANDS STILL, AND EYES UP! A hard posture that, though it looks very easy. "Stand still and see the salvation of God." I have known many men who could practice the first position who could not practice the second. Perhaps that was the hardest thing that the children of Israel ever did. When they had the sea before them and Pharaoh behind them, they were commanded to stand still. You must learn to stand still when you are provoked, to be silent when you are mocked, to wait under adverse Providences and still believe that in the darkest hour

the sun is not dead, but will shine out again. Patient waiting for Christ's coming—may we all learn this.

Another posture is this—QUICK MARCH, CONTINUALLY GOING ONWARD! Ah, there are some Christians who are constantly sleeping on their guns—they do not understand the posture of going onward. Quick march! Many Christians seem to be better skilled in the goose-step of lifting up one foot after another and putting them down in the same place, rather than going onwards. Oh, I would we all knew how to progress—to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Never think you are doing anything unless you are going forward—have more love, more hope, more joy—and extend your sphere of usefulness. Soldiers of Christ, Quick march! “Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward.” Let them not go back. Let them not stand still. On, on, on, soldiers of Christ! Go forward!

Another posture is one that is very hard to learn, indeed. It is what no soldier, I think, was ever told to do by his captain, except the soldier of Christ—EYES SHUT, AND EARS SHUT, AND HEART SHUT! That is when you go through Vanity Fair. Eyes shut, so as not to look upon temptation. Ears shut, so as not to regard either the praise or the scoffs of the world. And heart shut against evil, with the great stone of precept. “Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You.” Roll a stone at the door of your heart, that sin may not come out of it. That is a hard posture. But you will never fight the battles of the Lord till you know how to maintain that.

And then there is another posture—FEET FIRM, SWORD IN HAND. EYES OPEN; LOOKING AT YOUR ENEMY—WATCHING EVERY FEINT THAT HE makes. AND WATCHING, TOO, YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO LET FLY AT HIM, SWORD IN HAND! That posture you must maintain every day. Guard against the darts of the enemy. Hold up your shield and be ready to run on him and give him a deadly wound. I need not explain that. You that have to do with business, you that are in the ministry—you that are serving God as deacons and elders—you know how often you have to ward off the dart and look well at your enemy and meet him sword in hand, ready to rush in whenever your time shall come. Let no opportunity—let no occasion pass by. Wound your enemy whenever you can. Slay sin, slay error and destroy bitterness, as often as you have opportunity so to do.

There is one other posture, which is a very happy one for the child of God to take up and I would have you remember today. HANDS WIDE OPEN, AND HEART WIDE OPEN, WHEN YOU ARE HELPING YOUR BRETHREN—a hand ready to give whatever the Church needs and an eye ready to look up for help when you cannot give help with your hand and ready to guide the hand whenever help is wanting. And a heart open to hear the tale of another's want, to “rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep.” Above all, the best posture for Christ's Church is that of PATIENT WAITING FOR THE ADVENT OF CHRIST, a looking for His glorious appearance, who must come and will not tarry,

but who will get unto Himself the victory. Now, if you will go to your houses and if Divine Grace shall help you put yourselves through this form of drill, you will be mighty in the day of battle to put down the enemy.

And now suffer the word of exhortation, very brief, but hot and earnest. O Christian Brothers and Sisters, the more you think of it the more will you be ashamed of yourselves and of the present Church, that we do so little for Christ. Some eighteen hundred years ago there was a handful of men and women in an upper room. And that handful of men and women were so devoted to their Master and so true to His cause, that within a hundred years they had overrun every nation of the habitable globe. Yes, within fifty years they had preached the Gospel in every land. And now look at this great host gathered here today. Probably there is not less than two or three thousand members of Christian Churches, besides this mixed multitude and now what will you do in fifty years time? What does the Church do in any year of its existence? Why, hardly anything at all. I sometimes wonder how long God will allow the Church to be cooped up in England. I fear that we shall never see the world converted till this country is invaded. If it should ever happen that our hearths and homes should be invaded and that we should be scattered, north, south, east and west, all through the world, it will be the grandest thing that ever happened for the Church of Christ. I would go down on my knees and pray night and day that it may not happen for the nation's sake. But nevertheless I sometimes think that the greatest disaster that can ever occur to our nation will be the only way in which Christ's Church will be spread.

Look at it. Here you have your Churches in almost every street and despite the destitution of London, it is not destitute if you compare it with the nations of the world. Oh, ought we not as ministers of Christ pour out in legions? And ought not our people go everywhere in the habitable world, in ones and twos and threes, preaching the Gospel? But would you have us leave wife and house and children? I would not have you do it. But if you would do it then would Christ's power be seen and then would the might of the Church return to it once again. They were men without purse or scrip that went everywhere preaching the Word—and God was with them and the world heard them and was converted.

Now we cannot go if we are not sent and perhaps it is only reasonable that flesh and blood should not ask more. But still, if the life of God were in the Church, it would never stop in England for long. It would send forth its bands and legions, rolling along in one tremendous stream. A new crusade would be preached against the heathen nations and the sword of the Lord and of Gideon would smite the stoutest of our foemen and Christ would reign and His unsuffering kingdom then would come. Oh that the Church had power with men and power with God! Dear Brothers and Sisters, look out and see what you can do, every one of you. Do something today. Do not let this Sunday go without every one of you trying to be the means of winning a soul to God. Go to your Sunday Schools this afternoon. Go to your preaching stations. Go to your tract district each one in

his sphere. Go to your families, your mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters—go home and do *something* today.

“Fight the Lord’s battles.” You can do nothing of yourselves. But God will be with you, if you but have the will to serve Him, He will give you the power. Go today and seek to heal some breach, to put away some enmity, to slay some sin, or to drive out some error. And God being with you, this shall be a happier day to your soul and a holier day to the world than you have seen in all your experience before.

I will have one blow and then you may go. Sinner! I remember that you are here this morning as well as the saint. Sinner! You are not Christ’s soldier. You are a soldier of Satan. You will have your pay soon, Man, when you have worn your sword out and worn your arm out in fighting against Christ. You shall have your pay. Look at it and tremble. “The wages of sin is death,” and damnation, too. Will you take these two, or will you now renounce the black old tyrant and enlist under the banner of Christ? O that God would give you the earnest money of Free Grace and enlist you now as a soldier of the Cross. Remember, Christ takes the very dregs to be His soldiers. Every man that was in debt and every man that was discontented came to David and he became a captain over them. Now, if you are in debt this morning to God’s Law and cannot pay. If you are discontented with the devil’s service, jaded and worn out with pleasure—come to Christ and He will receive you, make you a soldier of the Cross and a follower of the Lamb. God be with you and bless you, from this day forth, even forever! Amen.

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LOVE PLEDGING FIDELITY NO. 2774

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 13, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 3, 1881.

*Then Jonathan and David made a covenant,
because he loved him as his own soul.”
1 Samuel 18:3.*

*“And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him:
for he loved him as he loved his own soul.”
1 Samuel 11:17.*

MANY books have been written concerning that surly old Prophet Jonah, yet here is a man with a name somewhat similar—Jonathan—but scarcely anybody has had much to say about him. Yet there was more sweetness in the little finger of Jonathan than in the whole body of Jonah! A wonderfully noble, lovable, magnanimous man was that heir apparent to the throne of Israel. I admire, beyond measure, the disinterested, unselfish affection which he had for the young shepherd-hero. It must have been perfectly clear to Jonathan that David had supplanted him. Jonathan himself had been the bravest of the brave—accompanied only by his armor bearer, he had gained a notable victory over the Philistines and now, here comes another young man who becomes even more distinguished than he and who takes his place as commander-in-chief of the army. Most young men in such a position as that would have been very jealous of the newcomer—and something of the envy of Saul, the father, might very naturally have been begotten in the heart of Jonathan the son. But it was not so, for Jonathan loved David as he loved his own soul.

Moreover, Jonathan knew very well that David was ordained of God to mount the throne. That throne was his by hereditary right, yet he foresaw that neither he nor any of his descendants would sit upon it, but that David would occupy it. Yet there was no trace of jealousy, or envy, or malice towards David—Jonathan loved him as he loved his own soul. It was a case of love at first sight, for he had no sooner looked upon David than “the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David” and it was also a case of love that was strong as death, for he clung to David to the last—and David, on his part, loved him intensely and, after Jonathan had fallen upon the fatal mount of Gilboa, lamented his death in sweetest strains of poetry.

But I am not going to talk much about the friendship of Jonathan and David. I want rather to use the union of heart that existed between them, and the consequences that resulted from it, as a lesson to those of us who have the sacred fire of love burning within our heart towards the Well-Beloved, even our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whose love toward us is marvelous, matchless, unspeakable Divine love, the likes of which has never been seen on earth!

There are two observations which I wish to make and to emphasize. They are taken from our two texts. The first is that *great love desires to bind itself to the beloved one*—“Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.” And, secondly, *great love desires renewed pledges from its object*—“Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.”

I. Now, first, GREAT LOVE DESIRES TO BIND ITSELF TO THE BELOVED ONE.

I am going to speak of the greatest love that ever was—the love of Jesus Christ to His chosen—and I want you to notice how the love of Christ to His people made Him desire to bind Himself to them. Think of this wondrous theme with all your hearts, so that, however feebly I may speak, the ardor of your imagination will put life into my poor words.

And, first of all, remember that *Jesus bound Himself to His people by Covenant bonds*. Of old, or before the earth was, our Lord Jesus had set His heart upon a people whom He foreknew. And His delights even at that time were with the sons of men. He delighted to think upon them as a people that should be His forever and, therefore, He accepted them to be His own by a Covenant gift from His Father’s hands. His Father gave to Him all those who should thereafter believe on Him and His great heart of love was set upon all the chosen ones who were thus given over to Him to be His portion and heritage forever and ever. This was the first link between Christ and the Church.

Then, in the fullness of time, our Lord’s great love to us led Him into visible union with us, for, as He had undertaken, when His Father gave us to Him, that He would save us and keep us, He came into the world to begin that great work by taking upon Himself our Nature. That was a wondrous union with us when He, who had made all things, did hide Himself away in the body of a Baby—when He, whose Presence filled the heavens and the earth, deigned to find a dwelling place in this world in the form of a carpenter’s Son, for, “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father), full of Grace and truth.” For this cause did the Son of God leave His Father’s house, that He might be joined unto His Church and they two became one flesh. “This is a great mystery,” said the Apostle, “but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” Because He loved us as His own soul, nothing would satisfy Him until He had partaken of the Nature of those who had been given to Him to become His portion and His heritage. “Bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,” is the eternal Son of God now that He is also the Son of Man, “for we are members of His body of His flesh, and of His bones.”

This being done, Jesus determined that the Covenant between Himself and His people should be kept up as an indivisible union right through—

**“Yes, said the Lord, with her I’ll go
Through all the depths of care and woe.
And on the Cross will even dare
The bitter pangs of death to bear.”**

He had come into the closest possible union with His Church because He loved her as His own soul—and He determined to maintain that union although it involved a life of toil, humiliation, poverty and pain. And although it also involved death, “even the death of the Cross.” But He would, at all costs, carry out the Covenant that He had made with His Father to be the Surety and the Substitute for His own people—“Having loved His own, which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.”

Because of this close connection with His Church, our Lord Jesus Christ has bound Himself to every believing soul by very definite promises. Christ so loves you, Beloved, that He has said to each one of you, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Up in Heaven, He maintains your right and defends your cause. And He has pledged His honor to secure your eternal safety and has linked His own cause and Kingdom, and His future success, with your being ultimately delivered from all sin and sorrow. It is wonderful to note how Christ, in entering into Covenant with His people, has bound Himself by every conceivable tie to those whom His Father gave Him—and whom He has redeemed with His precious blood!

Then, next, *Jesus would have us bound to Him on our part.* This kind of bond can never be all on one side, for true friendship leads to mutual love. To my mind there is a measure of mystery in both my texts—“Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.” Which is the, “he,” and which is the, “him,” referred to in this verse? Is the, “he,” David, and the, “him,” Jonathan? Or is the, “him,” David, and the, “he,” Jonathan? There is the same indefiniteness in the second text. There is a kind of mixing up of the pronouns and I like that, because a true friend or a true love is one’s other self—the two persons are so closely joined to one another that they have become one! So our blessed Lord Jesus, who has linked Himself with us by many strong ties, also would have us link ourselves with Him by many ties. Let us see whether we have bound ourselves to Him in that way. How is it done?

Our first conscious love-union to Christ is when we come and submit ourselves entirely to Him, that He may save us. Have all of you done this? I remember when I first realized that there was nothing I could do to save myself and that Christ had done it all. I was quite content that He should be my Savior on those terms. Content, did I say? No, more than that—I was delighted just to lay myself down at His dear feet that He might save me entirely.

After that submission to Him, there next came into my soul an ardent love to Him. I feel sure that it was so with all of you who have believed in Him—when you realized that He had saved you, you felt so glad and so thankful that you could not help loving Him who had done so much for you! That is the kind of union that Christ desires on our part toward

Himself—that we should be grateful for His redeeming love, grateful for the forgiveness of our sin and then that we should love Him in return. You did feel that love once, did you not? Do you feel it now? Let me stop a minute and ask you to think of Christ as actually being here. He is a real Christ you know—no dream, no mere imaginary person who has simply figured in the pages of fiction. He is a real, living Christ, and if you have submitted yourself to Him to save you, He has saved you! Then, do you not love Him? Give your love an opportunity of expressing itself! Look your Savior in the face and say to Him—

***“Do not I love You, O my Lord?
Behold my heart and see.”***

And if you can truthfully do it, let your soul as well as your voice sing those well-known words—

***“My Jesus, I love You, I know You are mine,
For You all the follies of sin I resign!
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, ‘tis now.”***

Because Jesus loves you as His own soul, He wants you to avow your union with Him by expressing the love which you really feel in your heart towards Him. That love should constrain us to confess that we belong wholly to Him, with all we are and all we have. There is not anything about us which is not our Lord’s—from the crown of our head to the soles of our feet, He has redeemed us with His precious blood! So let us acknowledge that we are “bought with a price.” Because Christ loves us, He wants us to acknowledge that we are His as surely as that He is ours—and not only to admit this in our own heart, but also to confess it before men by casting in our lot with His people. Has my Lord Jesus a visible Church anywhere on earth? Then, let me share the lot of those who are its members! What are its fortunes? Let them be mine. Is the Church dishonored and despised, maligned and persecuted? Then let me take the rough side of the hill with her—and bear the brunt of the storm with her rather than, in a cowardly manner, be ashamed of my Master and shrink from saying that I belong to Him. Because He loves you as His own soul, He wants you to openly declare that you are really His! In the presence of men and angels, or even in the presence of legions of devils, be not ashamed to let it be known that you belong to Jesus, just as Jonathan and David were not ashamed to let it be known that they were fast friends to one another.

Then, Beloved, it will delight Christ’s heart if you show kindness to all who belong to Him. You remember how David looked after poor Mephibosheth, the lame son of Jonathan? When he found him, he took care of him for Jonathan’s sake. So, dear Friends, look after Christ’s lame people, Christ’s poor people, Christ’s despondent people and Christ’s sick people. Visit them in their affliction, relieve their distresses, comfort their hearts and do it all for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake.

And because Jesus loves you, He wants you, Beloved, to merge all your life’s interests more and more in His and to find your gain in advancing His honor. He wants you to come to this point—that you will be rich when His cause prospers—that you will be poor when His Church

declines—that you will be happy when Christ is honored and that you will be sad when He is not loved. It will be to Him a great joy when He shall see you more and more entering into Covenant with Him, as He has already, to the fullest possible extent, entered into Covenant bonds with you.

If this is our Lord's desire, shall we not fulfill it? I think I hear some of you say, "We know all this and we have done all this." Then keep on doing it! As you sit in your pews, try to feel more than you have ever done before, the bonds of love which bind Christ to you and which also bind you to Christ. Say, with the Apostle, "We love Him because He first loved us."

These bonds are mutual and they are indissoluble. With confidence we may repeat the Apostolic challenge, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" For we know that nothing can make Him leave off loving us and nothing can make us leave off loving Him!

Further, as David accepted Jonathan's presents, we accept, O gracious Savior, all the priceless gifts that You bestow upon us! We see You taking off your royal robe and girding it around us. You laid aside all your bright array, that we might be clothed as princes of the blood-royal of Heaven! "Even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his belt" did Jonathan give to David—and our Lord Jesus has done the same for us, so that we have "the Sword of the Spirit," with which we may "fight the good fight of faith." And from His bow we may shoot upward the pointed arrows of prayer, and that we also may be girt about with the belt of the Truth of God. There is nothing, O Lord, which You have that You have not given to us and with both our hands we do accept of that which is Yours and of Yourself, also, for You, too, are given to us and, in return, we give ourselves to You—"It's all that we can do."

Let it really be so with us now! Let our love embrace the Well-Beloved! Let this be a time of love with us! Look up at His blessed face and then ask, "Was there ever any other so fair as He is?" Then look into His heart and enquire, "Was there ever another heart so tender, so true, so kind, as His?" Then count His royal and Divine honors and see whether any other lover ever wooed with such bejeweled hands and such a crown of Glory as He wears upon His blessed brow! Yes, look Him all over and see if there ever was such Incarnate Love in any other as you behold in Him. Did any other man ever love so intensely, or did any woman ever expend such a wealth of love as He has bestowed on us in stooping from the highest heavens to the lowest depths of misery and shame, and even to the grave, itself, that He might lift us up to sit forever with Him on His Throne?

O Heart! Heart! Heart! You ought to be smitten till you break into a thousand fragments if you do not love the Well-Beloved! What is wrong with you, cold Soul, lukewarm Soul, that you do not burn and glow with such good matter as this when you are speaking of the things which concern the King! Come, Beloved, let us love our Lord, or die! If we really are Christians, our hearts would sooner cease to beat than cease to love our blessed Savior!

Thus much, but all too poorly said, upon the Truth of God in our first text—great love desires to bind itself to the Beloved One.

II. Now, secondly, we learn from our second text that GREAT LOVE DESIRES RENEWED PLEDGES FROM ITS OBJECT—“Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.”

It was not out of distrust, but *by reason of a sort of sacred jealousy* that “Jonathan caused David to swear again.” He did not fear that his friend would prove untrue, but he needed to have every possible confirmation of the covenant of love which they had made with one another. And, believing Soul, though Christ does not distrust you, He knows what is in you and He is jealous of you. Our Savior is as jealous of us as His Father is—the immeasurable greatness of the love of Jesus Christ to us moves Him to feel an Infinite jealousy of us. He loves us so much that He will have all our love and, if you are really His beloved ones, He will adopt ways and means of extracting from you the last particle of your love, that He may have it all for Himself. As Rutherford said to a noble lady who had lost a number of children, one after the other, “The Lord Jesus loves you so much that He will not let one drop of your love go in any other direction than towards Himself.” And though He may not deal in that way with us, by taking away our friends and kindred, yet I am sure that where He loves us much, He will have the whole of our love. He cannot bear that our heart should be divided, or in any measure taken from Him. So, again, and again, and again, He causes us to renew our vows and our Covenant with Him. So would He have us renew our love to Him.

Further, *this is the only return we can make for His love.* Your little children, on your knee, cost you much care and anxiety—and when they kiss you and fondle you, and tell you how much they love you, they may well do so, for that is all they can do. They cannot help you in your daily toil, or bear any share of your heavy burdens and, in like manner, all that we can do for Christ is to love Him. Alas, that we do so little of that! I fear that sometimes we are more ready to preach, or teach, or give away tracts, or do something in the way of active service for Christ, but, after all, the acceptableness of these things is to be measured by the love to our Lord that is in them. To love Him is the chief thing—it is our love that Christ longs for above everything else. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest Commandment of all and, therefore, does our Savior wish us again and again to renew our vows of love to Him.

Besides, *it is for our highest benefit that we should do this.* Our love is often so feeble and cold that it needs to be stirred up again. The fire in our heart continually burns low so that we need to constantly have the flame fanned and fresh fuel put on, that we may love our Lord more and more.

And chilly as we are in ourselves, *we are often tempted and allured by other loves*, and are apt to lend a listening ear to the charmer’s fascinating voice. You know that it is so, Beloved. We are not true to our Lord as

we ought to be and, therefore, He asks us again, and again, and yet again, “Do you love Me? Do you love Me? Do you love Me?” And if we are grieved that He asks us the question a third time, “Do you love Me!” we ought to remember that we have grieved Him many more than three times—it is our unfaithfulness to Him that lays upon Him the necessity of putting this enquiry to us so often.

It is also for our benefit that we should often renew our pledges of love to our Lord *because we cannot be happy unless we are wholly taken up with love to Him*. “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,” said Solomon. And we may well say the same. There is nothing upon earth that can give solid satisfaction to a Christian apart from Christ. You may make him rich, you may lavish upon him all conceivable delights, but these things will all mock him, like the mirage of the desert, unless his heart is right with Christ, is filled with the love of Jesus and the sunlight of the Divine Presence is there. I am sure that it is so! You unconverted people may be happy enough in your way, without Christ, but a true-born child of God cannot have any bliss apart from His Lord. If you mean to be a Christian, you must remember there remains but one source of true delight to you—but that one Source of delight contains more than all other springs of joy put together! If you do but drink of it, you shall be more than satisfied. But if you turn aside from that Fountain of Living Waters, your soul will thirst and faint. It is God’s decree that you shall mourn until you come back to the Beloved and yet again swear allegiance to Him, for He will have you do it because He loves you as He loves His own soul.

I wish that all of us who love the Lord would at once renew our Covenant with Him. It may help us to do so if I remind you of the past times when we have given ourselves up to Him. I remember well the first surrender of my soul to my Savior. Do you not remember the same hallowed season? Turn over the leaves of your diary till you come to the record of it. “On such a day, I was born-again. On such a day, I was married to Christ. My heart was wholly given to Him and I rejoiced in Him.” Recollect that solemn surrender and, as you recall it, say over again, as you said then—

***“Here, Lord, I give myself away.
It’s all that I can do.”***

Do you remember your Baptism—you who were, in Scriptural fashion, buried with Christ in Baptism? I recollect mine. What did I mean by it? I meant that as I gave up my body to be temporarily buried in the river—as the water rolled over me and I was as one dead and buried, so did I declare that I was dead to sin, dead to the world and buried to it all. And I also meant that as I rose again from the stream, so would I live for Christ, alone, in newness of life, as one who had been dead, buried and had risen again. To me that was the most solemn day of my life! I remember rising early, at the break of day, that I might have some hours of prayer before starting, for I had some miles to walk along a country road. And all the way I was thinking of the public dedication of myself to my Master. I meant that to be my funeral day to all except Himself and the day of my resurrection with Him! And I hope it was, and also hope it was the same with you. If so, I pray you do not belie your Baptism! I charge you

who have been buried with Christ, that you bear in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus, not in one place only, as was the fashion under the old Law—but in your entire body, that you may be wholly Christ's, completely Christ's, henceforth and forever.

Since that time of our Baptism, how often have we renewed our vows of love to our Lord as we have come to His Table! We have partaken of the bread and the wine as the memorials of His love to us and I think that, there, we have often given ourselves up to Him again. Do so again, Beloved, as you come presently to the Communion Table. Come as if you were coming for the first time. Say, "My Savior, I take You to myself, to be my life and the food of my life. And I will, by Your Grace, live to You and to You alone."

Some of us have a further reason for renewing our vows of love to our Lord, because we have lately risen from a sickbed. Shall not the life that has been prolonged be wholly the Lord's? If He has taken away from us the heavy burden of terrible pain—the iron yoke of deep depression of spirit—do we not feel bound to yield ourselves up to Him as though we were beginning our Christian life over again? And I think that others of you who have not been in pain and have not been depressed in spirit, ought to feel as though, because of God's great mercy to you in keeping you out of such trials, you should yield yourselves anew to Him.

Some of you may have reached another anniversary of your birthday, or you may have come to some other period of your life that is memorable. Perhaps you have taken a new business, or have gone to live in another house—well, I hardly like to think of going into a new house, or even sleeping in another room without once more saying, "Come here with me, my Lord. I am Yours wherever I am, on land or sea, in this country or in a foreign land—I am eternally joined to You, and Your servant would I be at all times." It would not be amiss to renew your Covenant with your Lord every morning when the day breaks—and to renew it yet again every night as you fall asleep, for, oh, it is most helpful to the spirit to be often coming to Christ—to be constantly committing your soul into His dear hands!

I am sure that Christ is pleased with you when you do this, for He loves you as He loves His own soul. He is never tired of hearing you tell Him how much you love Him—you can never continue speaking on that theme so long as to weary Him by your confession of love to Him! You can never praise Him so much that He is tired of your song! You can never implore His mercy to the point He is weary of your prayers! That can never happen! And when you come and bring yourself—poor, poor self, as it is—to Christ, He never disdains your love! A little child delights to caress its mother and, as the mother is never happier than when she is receiving the child's love, so, believe me, it is with Christ. Yet some of you seem to think that He does not want your affection. Or you fancy that it does not matter how you express your love—that a few hurried words of prayer will suffice, or a dull, formal hymn of praise—but it is not so. Do you not want to make Him happy? My Brother, in his prayer, thanked God that it was possible for us to add even to the bliss of Christ

in Heaven, and it is so. The shepherd rejoices when he finds the sheep that was lost, but does his joy end when he finds it? Oh, no! The father had great joy when the prodigal returned, but did his joy end when his boy came home? Oh, no! And, likewise, Christ is always glad of conversation and communion with His beloved ones, so give Him much of it. Say to Him sometimes—

***“With You all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.”***

And sometimes, hour by hour, do nothing but commune with Him. Yes, always, when about your business, or whatever else you have to do, abide in Him, for He would have you do it.

In closing, I would earnestly urge those who love the Master to take frequent opportunities of getting alone with their Beloved, that they may express their love to Him. Do you often do that, dear Friends? To my mind, that is one of the choice forms of devotion—just to tell the Savior how you love Him—to sit down, or kneel, or stand, or walk, and say, “My gracious Lord, I do love You. Teach me to love You more.” Tell Him why you love Him. Rehearse His deeds of Grace towards you. Keep on at that theme till your heart burns within you with a vehement flame of love to your Lord!

Another acceptable thing to do is, every now and then, to do something specially for Christ Himself or to give something directly to Christ Himself—as directly as it can be done. As the woman washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the flowing tresses of her head—and kissed them unceasingly and anointed them with the precious ointment—so do you something for Him. Some will think it wasteful to break the alabaster box and to anoint Him thus, but do it, whatever they may say. There is nothing too precious to be lavished upon Christ. Possibly you can find some poor saint to whom you will do some great deed of love because you are doing it for Christ. Or you may know of some part of the work of Christ that needs help that will cost you much self-denial to render. Do it, but tell nobody about it! Never let your name be seen in the matter, but do it for Him. If you do really love Him and He is your All-in-All, you will not need any urging to do this.

When we are in love, we need no one to urge us to give tokens and pledges of love—it is a joy to us to do anything that will give pleasure to our beloved. It is no misery to the tree to produce its luscious fruit and it is no severe task to a Christian to perform deeds of love to Christ! So I will not urge you to it, but leave the matter with you, and with the Well-Beloved of your souls.

But what shall I say to those who do not love Christ? Do not love *Christ*? O you blind, you dead, you foolish ones! The Lord have mercy on you! If He does not, remember that this is the text that belongs to you, “If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha”—“let him be accursed, for the Lord comes.” And every godly soul must say, “Amen,” even to that dreadful sentence, for he who loves not the blessed Lord must be accursed!

God save you all from that terrible doom, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 SAMUEL 18:1-16; 20:1-17.**

1 Samuel 18:1. *And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.* Jonathan, the brave young soldier who had himself done great exploits, naturally admired the youthful warrior who had slain the Philistine giant, and also admired the modesty of his speech when he returned with the head of Goliath in his hand. “The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.”

2-4. *And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father’s house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him.* No doubt one suitable to his rank as the heir-apparent to the throne of Israel.

4, 5. *And gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his belt. And David went out wherever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war.* Probably Jonathan had previously occupied that position, but now that David is called to supplant him, Jonathan is not jealous of him, but he loves him as he loves his own soul.

5-7. *And he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul’s servants. And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women answered one another as they played, and said.* Singing in chorus, with answering refrains—

7-9. *Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day forward.* This shows how envy will destroy a man’s own peace of mind, as well as make him plot against the one of whom he is envious. Instead of being thankful to God for sending him such a valiant champion as David to deliver both himself and his people, Saul is full of malice towards the young hero simply because he receives his due need of praise for his victory over the giant. “Saul eyed David” with an evil and envious eye—looked askance upon him and determined to do him mischief whenever he could.

10. *And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house.* Probably talking wildly and foolishly.

10. *And David played with his hand, as at other times.* That is, as he had at other times, played upon the harp to chase away the evil spirit.

10-12. *And there was a javelin in Saul’s hand. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David*

avoided out of his presence twice. And Saul was afraid of David. David was not afraid of Saul, although Saul was the man with the javelin, and with the murderous, malicious spirit which prompted him to hurl it at the young harpist. David—guileless, brave, honest, trustful, was not afraid of Saul—but “Saul was afraid of David.”

12-14. *Because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul. Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him. And, young man, you also will be wise if God is with you! And you will be able to behave yourself wisely, discreetly, prosperously, as the word seems to mean. Even when malicious eyes are fixed upon you, they will not be able to find any fault in you if the Lord is with you. You will win favor where you least expect it if you do but so live that God can be with you—if you keep the vessel of your nature so pure that the Master can use it. May it be your portion and mine to have it said of each of us, “The Lord was with him!”*

15, 16. *Therefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them. This love of the people only caused Saul’s hatred of David to be carried to a still greater excess. But Jonathan still loved David and promised to cleave to him whatever might happen. In the 20th Chapter we can read still more concerning this faithful friendship.*

1 Samuel 20:1, 2. *And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? What is my iniquity? And what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life? And he said unto him, God forbid; you shall not die. Jonathan could not think that his father really intended to take the life of his friend!*

2, 3. *Behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will show it to me; and why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so. And David swore moreover, and said, Your father certainly knows that I have found favor in your eyes: and he says, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death. He had so often escaped, as it were, by the skin of his teeth, from his cruel persecutor, that he knew himself to be in a position of extreme peril.*

4. *Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatever your soul desires, I will even do it for you. Such was his love for David that he would make no exception—whatever there was that David wished him to do, he would do it for him.*

5-10. *And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at dinner: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even. If your father at all misses me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem, his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family. If he say thus, It is well; your servant shall have peace: but if he is very angry, then be sure that evil is determined by him. Therefore you*

shall deal kindly with your servant; for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the LORD with you: notwithstanding, if there is in me iniquity, slay me yourself; for why should you bring me to your father? And Jonathan said, Far be it from you: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon you, then would I not tell you? Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? Or what if your father answers you roughly? What am I to do in such a case as that? If your father should turn against you as well as against me, what is to be done then?

11. *And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field. To get quite alone that they might express to one another the feelings of their inmost hearts, and also might consult together without any risk of being overheard.*

12-17. *And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about tomorrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there is good toward David, and I then send not unto you, and show it to you; the LORD do so and much more to Jonathan. But if it please my father to do you evil, then I will show it to you, and send you away, that you may go in peace: and the LORD be with you, as He has been with my father. And you shall not only while yet I live show me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: but also you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever: no, not when the LORD has cut off the enemies of David, everyone from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul. Thus were these two men bound together by ties of mutual love—may we be thus bound to Jesus! Oh, that there may be such love between us and our Lord as shall even excel the love of Jonathan and David!*

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NO. 1188

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 16, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“What if your father answers you roughly?”
1 Samuel 20:10.***

IT was not an unlikely thing that his father would answer Jonathan roughly. Saul had taken great umbrage against David, while Jonathan, his eldest son, on the contrary, loved David as his own soul. Jonathan could hardly think that his father really meant harm to so good a man as David, and he expressed to David that opinion. And then David, to be prepared for the worst, asked him this question, “What if your father answers you roughly?” It did so happen. Saul answered his son with bitter words and in the desperation of his anger he even hurled a javelin at him! Yet Jonathan did not forsake David—he clung to him with all the faithfulness of love—and until his death, which was much mourned by David, he remained his fast and faithful friend.

Now, this question of David to Jonathan is one which I wish to put this morning to all believers in Christ, especially to the younger ones who have lately entered into covenant with the great Son of David, and who, in the ardor of their hearts, feel that they could live and die for Him. I want to put before them the supposition that they will meet with opposition from their dearest friends—perhaps their father, brother, husband, or uncle will answer them roughly—or perhaps their mother, wife, or sister will become a persecutor to them. What then? What will they do under such circumstances? Will they follow the Lord through evil report? “What if your father answers you roughly?”

Remember that this supposition is a very likely one. There *are* a few Christians so favorably circumstanced that all their friends accompany them in the pilgrimage to Heaven. What advances they ought to make in the sacred journey! What excellent Christians they ought to be! They are like plants in a conservatory—they ought to grow and bring forth the loveliest flowers of Divine Grace. But there are not very many who are altogether in that case. The large proportion of Christians find themselves opposed by those of their own family, or by those with whom they labor or trade. Is it not likely to be so?

Was it not so from the beginning? Is there not enmity between the seed of the serpent and the Seed of the woman? Did not Cain slay his brother Abel because he was accepted of the Lord? In the family of Abraham was there not an Ishmael, born after the flesh, who persecuted Isaac, who was born after the Spirit? Was not Joseph hated by his brothers? Was not David persecuted by Saul, Daniel by the Persian princes and Jeremiah by the kings of Israel? Has it not ever been so? Did not the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, meet with slander, cruelty and death—and did He not tell us that we must not look for favor where He found rejection? He said

plainly, "I came not to send peace upon the earth, but a sword." And He declared that the immediate result of preaching the Gospel would be to set the son against the father and the father against the son, so that a man's foes should be they of his own household.

Did He not carefully inquire of every recruit who wished to enlist in His army, "Have you counted the cost?" Have you not admired His perfect honesty and admirable caution in dealing with men when He bids them remember that if they follow Him they must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and be content to be hated of all men for His sake? He warns us not to expect that the disciple will be above his Master, for if men have called the Master of the house, Beelzebub, they will assuredly confer no sweet titles upon His household! Since our Lord has forewarned us, it is well for us to stand ready for the trials which He predicts and to ask ourselves whether we are ready to bear oppression for Christ's sake.

I press the question upon you who think of avowing yourselves Believers, for most likely it will come practically home to you and it is well when you begin to build a house, to calculate whether you will be able to finish it. There are very many of God's servants here, whose life is made bitter by the continual worry they endure from their ungodly relatives and associates. Often do they sigh for the wings of a dove to fly away and be at rest. I feel the deepest sympathy with them and it is not only with the intention of forearming the younger ones, but with the hope of cheering and consoling those who have been long in the fiery furnace, that I shall speak, this morning, upon this text, "What if your father answers you roughly?"

I. Our first point is this—WHAT YOU MAY DO. What will you do should your friends answer you roughly? In the first confidence of your love to Christ you go and tell your father of your conversion. Well, what if he should ridicule you? You run to your mother and communicate your change of heart. What if she should scoff at it? You tell a little of your heart to some friend—what if that friend should turn and laugh at you? I will tell you what, perhaps, you will do, though I earnestly pray that you may do no such thing. You may, "*by-and-by, be offended.*"

I mean that you may leave Christ altogether, because you cannot bear His Cross and, though willing enough to go to Heaven with Him if the way were smooth, it may be that, like Mr. Pliable, finding that there is a slough to be got through, you will turn your back upon the good country and return to the City of Destruction. Many have done so. Our Lord's parable of the seed sown in stony places teaches us that many shoots which promise fair for harvest perish when the sun arises with burning heat because they have no root. Observation confirms this statement. If yonder fair-weather professors of religion could have been daily hailed with general acclamation, they would, after a certain fashion, have continued steadfast.

But inasmuch as they have met with rebuffs and chills which they never bargained for, they have cast off all religion and joined with the fashionable world. To such, the earthly father is dearer than the Father who is in Heaven. The brother after the flesh is dearer than that Brother who is born for adversity. And the ungodly husband is more precious than the everlasting Bridegroom. And so they desert their Lord. Or, it may hap-

pen to you that, instead of being by-and-by offended, you may continue for awhile, but *you may gradually give way and at last yield altogether*. There are many among us who could bear to lose our heads at a stroke for Christ—but to be burned in a slow fire—ah, that would try us!

And if that slow fire lasted not for a day or so, but for weeks, or months, or years! What then? If, after much patient endurance, the cruel mocking still continues. If the hard words and bitter speeches never cease—what then? Surely, unless Divine Grace sustains us, the flesh will clamor to be rid of this uneasy yoke and will look out for some by-path by which it may escape the rigor of the rough road and go back, again, to the world! Grace will hold on and out to the end, but Nature at her best, with firmest resolutions, has only to be tried up to a certain point and she will surely yield. This is what we *may* do—but may God grant that we may be preserved from such a wretched course of action, for, if we do give way because of opposition from ungodly friends, it involves tremendous guilt!

To give up religion because of persecution is to prefer *ourselves* to Christ—to be selfish enough to regard our own ease rather than His Glory—to consult our own peace rather than His honor though we have said that we love Him beyond all else for redeeming us by His blood. It will show that we love Him not, but are ungrateful, false and hypocritical. With all our true professions, if we flinch from persecution, it will prove that we only need our price and, like the traitor, Judas, we, too, will sell our Master, not for 30 pieces of silver, possibly, but to escape ridicule or avoid ill-will. It will become clear, also, that we prefer the praise of man to the approval of God. A smile from a face which is soon to die we value at a higher price than the love of God, or the Redeemer's approbation!

Peter, for a moment, was more affected by the question of a silly maid than by his allegiance to his Lord! But how dreadful to fall into that condition *deliberately*—and think more of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that is but as a worm—than of the Lord, our Maker and Judge, who, alone, is to be feared! Is not this folly, treason and dire iniquity? To forsake the Lord through persecution is to set time before eternity, to barter Heaven for this world's pleasures, to renounce eternal life for a few hours of ease and to involve ourselves in endless misery rather than endure a stupid jest or a senseless jibe! It comes to that.

Many a man has had life and death set before him—the life has been shaded with the Cross—the death has been gilded over with transient merriment. And he has chosen the everlasting death with its glitter in preference to eternal life with its momentary trial! May God grant we may never be of so insane a mind, for if we are, we shall be numbered with those mentioned in Revelation, of whom it is said that “the fearful,” which is being interpreted the *cowardly*, “and the unbelieving, the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars”—for that is the class of persons with whom cowards are numbered—“shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8). May the mercy of God deliver us from that death!

Like true soldiers may we buckle on our harness and resolve that let the battle rage as it may, through Divine Grace we will not desert our col-

ors. We prefer death, itself, to the disgrace of forsaking a cause so true, a doctrine so pure, a Savior so gracious, a Prince so noble and so worthy of our most loyal service. But if left to ourselves we may fall into what is as bad as open apostasy. When we find the father, or the wife, or the friend answering us roughly, *we may make a pitiful compromise between Christ and the world*. I warn you solemnly against this, above everything else. It has the look of being the prudent and proper thing to do. "Can I not please men and please God? May I not go a little way with Christ and a little way with the world?"

O Soul, if you attempt this, you must fail and, moreover, you will have chosen the roughest road of all, for if a man serves God and serves Him thoroughly, he will meet with many comforts to balance his crosses. And if a man thoroughly serves Satan, he will enjoy whatever poor comfort is to be gotten out of sin. But if he goes between, he will feel the discomforts of both and the pleasures of neither! Running the gauntlet on board ship is not worse than attempting to be friends with Christ and Satan at the same time. I believe many a professing woman has given way, at first, to her ungodly husband when she should have been decided—and she has been embittered the rest of her life. And many a husband, many a son, many a man of business, has been undecided in a minor matter for the sake peace—and from that very moment the other side has never believed in his sincerity. Having been given an inch, the world has demanded all and that has been an end to all liberty!

If you yield a single point of honesty or true religion, the unconverted will not believe in you as they would have done if you had been firm throughout. Men respect a thoroughbred Christian, but nobody has a good word for a mongrel. Be one thing or the other, either hot or cold, or Christ will reject you, and the world, too. If a thing is right, do it! If you resolve to serve the Lord, do it, offend or please! And if, on the other hand, you prefer the service of Satan, do at least be honest enough not to pretend to be on the Lord's side. Remember the challenge of Elijah, "If God is God, serve Him. If Baal is God, serve him." But do not attempt a compromise, which will end in a miserable breakdown. Mark Antony drove two lions yoked together through the streets of Rome, but no Mark Antony could ever drive the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the lion of the Pit in a leash together! They will never agree! Be you warned, then, against falling into the meanness of *compromise*, for compromise is nothing better than varnished rebellion against God, a mockery of His claims and an insult to His judgment. May the Grace of God keep us from this, for left to ourselves we shall fall into this snare.

I will tell you what you may also do, and I pray that the Holy Spirit may lead you to do it. *You may take up humbly, but firmly, this decided stand*—"If my father answers me roughly he must do so, but I have another Father who is in Heaven and I shall appeal to Him. If the world condemns me, I shall accept its condemnation as a confirmation of that gracious verdict of acquittal which comes from the great Judge of All, for I remember it is written, 'If the world hates you you know that it hated Me before it hated you.' And, 'If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the

world, therefore the world hates you.” Be it ours to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ! May we count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all earth’s treasures!

May a coward blush never defile our cheeks because we are ashamed of Jesus—far rather may we be willing to be made a laughingstock than for a moment think of turning aside from our Beloved Lord! May we never be false or fearful, but firmly and calmly, with the confidence of a love which cannot falter, let us cleave to our Lord even though all men should forsake Him—

**Oh, learn to scorn the praise of men!
Oh, learn to lose with God.
For Jesus won the world through shame,
And beckons you His road.”**

II. The second head is WHAT THE TRIAL WILL DO FOR US IF WE ARE HELPED TO BEAR UP UNDER IT. “What if your father answers you roughly? “First, *it will grieve us.* It is by no means pleasant to be opposed in doing right by those who ought to help us in it. It is very painful to flesh and blood to go contrary to those we love. Moreover, those who hate Christians have a way of putting their reviling so that they are sure to make us wince. They watch our weak points and with very wonderful skill they turn their discoveries to account. Trained by the old master of all malice, they are not slow to ply their lash where we are most tender. If one thing is more provoking than another, they will be sure to say it—and say it when we are least able to bear it.

It may be they are very polite people and, if so, your refined persecutors have a very dainty way of cutting to the bone and yet smiling all the while. They can say a malicious thing so delicately that you can neither resent it nor endure it. The art of persecuting has been so long studied by the seed of the serpent that they are perfect masters of it and know how to make the iron enter into the soul. Do not be astonished, therefore, if you are sorely vexed—neither be amazed, as though some strange thing had happened to you. The martyrs did not suffer sham pains. The racks on which they were stretched were not beds of ease, nor were their prisons, parlors of comfort. Their pains were agonies! Their martyrdoms were torments! If you had sham griefs you might expect counterfeit joys. Let the reality of your tribulation assure you of the reality of the coming Glory.

The opposition of your friends *will try your sincerity.* If you are a hypocrite you will soon yield to opposition. “The game is not worth the candle,” you say, and you will be off. And for the Church’s sake, very likely it will be a blessing, for the wheat is all the better for being rid of the chaff! And if the wind of persecution can blow you away, you are chaff. The rough answers of opponents will *try your faith.* You say you believe in Jesus—now we shall see if you do—for if you cannot bear a little trial from men and women, surely you will not be able to bear the worse trials from the devil and his angels. “If you have run with the footmen and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, where you rested, they wearied you, then how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” If you cannot bear the trials of life, how will you endure the ordeals of *death?*

Persecution will *try your love to Jesus*. If you really love Him you will cheerfully stand in the pillory of reproach with Him, and when enemies have filth to hurl, you will say, "Throw it upon *me* rather than upon Him. If there is a hard thing to be said, say it about me rather than against my Lord."—

***"If on my face for His dear name
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
For He'll remember me."***

It will try your love, I say, and all your Graces in their turn—and this is good for you. These virtues will not increase in strength unless they are brought into action. And if they are not tested, who is to know of what sort they are? Yon valiant soldier in quiet barracks at home could fight, no doubt, but how do you know till he has passed through a campaign? He who has charged up to the cannon's mouth. He who is adorned with a saber cut across his brow and bears many a wound beside, which he gained in the service of his king—he is brave beyond question! Good gold must expect to be tried in the fire—these oppositions are sent on purpose that our faith, our love and all our Graces should be proved genuine by enduring the test!

The rough answers of those who should be our friends *will keep us awake*. I think it was Erskine who used to say, "Lord, deliver me from a sleepy devil." And truly it is a prayer well worth praying! When everything goes smoothly and nobody ridicules us, we are very apt to be off our guard. But when we are stung by undeserved reproaches and insults, and when for our love we receive only anger or unkindness, we are not very likely to go to sleep! Such afflictions *drive you to your knees*. Perhaps you have read the story of Mr. Eraser, one of the ministers in Rossshire, who had a cold, unfeeling woman for a wife. She was very cruel to him and would never allow light or fire in his study. He had actually worn two holes in the plaster at the ends of his room where his hand had touched as he paced to and fro in the dark.

At a meeting of ministers who were not of his mind in Divine things, one of them thought to make sport of him by remarking that he would, no doubt, very heartily agree with the toast of, "Health to our wives." To their astonishment he answered, "Mine has been a better wife to me than any of yours has been to you. She has sent me to my knees seven times a day, when I would not otherwise have gone, which is more than any of you can say of yours." Personally I should greatly prefer not to have such a perpetual blister applied to me! But had the good Physician appointed me so severe a trial, I doubt not that He would have had good reason for it. Out of what men call weeds, the wise man extracts a medicine. And out of these bitter trials the Lord produces a sacred tonic which braces us for a higher life of communion with Himself.

Trials from the enemies of Jesus *confirm our faith*. Those who are never tried usually possess a poor, tottering faith. But trial, especially persecution, is like the rough March wind which goes howling through the forest. While the young oaks are almost torn up by the roots, at first, it loosens the soil for them and they send out more roots till they get such a firm grip that they defy the hurricane. That which shakes them at first,

strengthens them afterwards! The tried saint is the *bold* saint—and the *firm* saint—therefore take the rough answer joyfully and look for good results from it. A little persecution for the Church in England would be a grand thing for her! We have fallen on very velvety days when zeal for God is rare and decision for the Truth of God scarcely to be met with. The Church has made terms with the world and gone to sleep, Satan rocking her cradle. Many a man professes to be a Christian who is nothing better than a baptized worldling. And many a man sets up to be a minister of Christ who is a mere reader of other people's sermons and a hireling who cares not for the sheep. The fan of persecution, if it purged the threshing floor of the Church, would bestow great benefits upon her.

Rough speeches, too, will have this good effect upon genuine Christians—it will *lead them to plead for those who utter them*. I remember a good man who used to say of a certain swearing fellow who took delight to vex him with his horrid taunts and oaths, “Well, after all, I might forget to pray for him, but he reminds me of it, for he will not let me go by without a curse.” If our friends were all very smooth-spoken and concealed their enmity to Christ, we might entertain a false hope about them and might not pray for them. But when we see that the old nature is there, and very rampant, it drives us to intercession for them—and who can tell but what the Lord may give us their souls as our reward? Certainly opposition has another good effect, that *it drives those subject to it into the truly separated path*—they are known to be Christians and proclaimed as such by their revilers.

I do not think it is a bad thing, young man, when you go to that warehouse, that they should advertise you as a Christian by crying out, “Hal-loa, here comes one of the Methodist sort.” It is good for you to be known! If you are what you should be, you will not mind being labeled, nor being tested, either. It will help to keep you right when temptations arise and it will frequently deliver you from trials of a more fascinating kind, for, suppose they forsake your company because you are a Christian—will not that be well? Those who leave you on that account are a very gainful loss! An honorable lady, now with God, when she joined this Church, told me how, after her Baptism, many of her aristocratic friends had ceased to call upon her, or invite her to their houses. I congratulated her upon it, for it rendered it all the easier for her to select her own company!

Her real worth of character and kindness of spirit soon won back all who were worth having—and the rest were happily removed. Such as shun you for following the Lord are persons whom you, yourself, might shun. We gain nothing by the love of those who love not God. One good effect of being persecuted at home is this, it makes you gentler abroad. If, my brother Christian, you have those at home who make you unhappy. If you are a wise man, you will be the better able to have patience with outsiders. Men wondered why Socrates was so patient with his pupils and so good-tempered, but he ascribed it to having been hardened by the opposition of others and by being schooled at home by his shrewish wife, Xanthippe.

Perhaps you will have the greater patience with those who scoff, and the greater sympathy with those who are scoffed at, from having had your

share in the common lot of the saints. Thus to you as to Samson, out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong comes forth sweetness. This lion roars upon you, but the day shall come when you will find honey in it and bless the name of the Lord!

III. My third point is, HOW SHOULD YOU BEHAVE UNDER THE TRIAL? May the Holy Spirit enable you to act very discreetly as well as decidedly. *Never court opposition.* God forbid we should do so! Some zealots seem bent on making religion objectionable. The cup we hold to a sinful world is, in itself, repugnant enough to fallen nature—there can be no wisdom in making it yet more objectionable by presenting it with a scowling face. It is as well when you have medicine to give to a child to show him a piece of sugar, too—so let your kindness, cheerfulness and gentleness sweeten that which the world is not very likely to receive anyway—but which it will the less resent if you present it with love, showing a desire to live peaceably with all men and to consult the comfort of others rather than your own.

And then *endure whatever you have to endure with the greatest possible meekness.* There was a farmer whose wife was very irritated with him because of his attending a dissenting place of worship and joining with Christian people. She often declared that she would not bear it much longer. But he was very patient and made no harsh reply to her. One day she fetched him out of the harvest field and said, “Now it is come to this—you will give up those people, or give me up.” And she brought out a web of cloth and said, “Now you take half of this and I’ll take the other half, for I am going.” He said, “No, my Dear, you are welcome to it all. You have always been a very good industrious wife, take it all.”

Then she proposed taking a part of their household goods and settling everything for a final separation, but again he said, “Take all there is. If you will really go away, take everything you like, for I should not wish you to be uncomfortable. And come back again whenever you please, I shall always be glad to see you.” Seeing that he talked in that way, she said, “Do you want me to go?” “No,” he said, “it is your own wish, not mine. I cannot give up my religion, but anything else I can do to make you stay and be happy, I will do.” This was too much for her. She resolved to cease her opposition, and in a short time went with her husband to his place of worship and became, herself, a Believer. This is the surest way to victory! Yield *everything* but what it would be *wrong* to yield. Never grow angry. Keep cool and let the railing be all on one side.

There was a poor godly woman who used to attend the ministry of Mr. Robinson, of Leicester, and her husband, a very coarse, brutal man, said to her one day in his wrath, “If you ever go to St. Mary’s Church again I’ll cut both your legs off.” He was a dreadful man and equal to any violence—but on the next occasion of worship his wife went as before. As she came home, she commended herself to the care of God, expecting to be assailed. Her husband said to her, “Where have you been?” “I have been to St. Mary’s Church,” she said. With that he felled her to the ground with a terrible blow on the face. Rising up, she gently said, “If you strike me on the other side I shall as freely forgive you as I do now.” She had been a very passionate woman before conversion, and had been accustomed to give

her husband as good as he could send, and therefore he was struck with her gentleness. "Where did you learn this patience?" he asked. Her reply was, "By God's Grace I learned it at St. Mary's." "Then you may go as often as you like." Presently he went, also, and the war was over. There is nothing like meekness. It will conquer the strongest.

After bearing with meekness, *return good for evil*. For cruel words return warmer love and increased kindness. The most renowned weapon for a Christian to fight his antagonists is that of overcoming evil with good. Evil to evil is beast-like and no Christian will indulge in it. But good for evil is Christ-like and we must practice it. I think I have told you before the story of the husband who was a very loose, wild, depraved, man of the world. He had a wife who for many years bore with his ridicule and unkindness, praying for him day and night, though no change came over him except that he grew even more bold in sin. One night, being at a drunken feast with a number of his cursing companions, he boasted that his wife would do anything he wished—she was as submissive as a lamb.

"Now," he said, "she has gone to bed hours ago. But if I take you all to my house, she will at once get up and entertain you and make no complaint." "Not she," they said, and the matter ended in a bet, and away they went. It was in the small hours of the night—but in a few minutes she was up and remarked that she was glad that she had two chickens ready, and if they would wait a little she would soon have a supper spread for them. They waited and before long, at that late hour, the table was spread and she took her place at it as if it was quite an ordinary matter, acting the part of hostess with cheerfulness. One of the company, touched in his better feelings, exclaimed, "Madam, we ought to apologize to you for intruding upon you in this way and at such an hour. I am at a loss to understand how it is you receive us so cheerfully, for being a religious person you cannot approve of our conduct."

Her reply was, "I and my husband were both formerly unconverted, but, by the Grace of God, I am now a believer in the Lord Jesus. I have daily prayed for my husband and I have done all I can to bring him to a better mind. But as I see no change in him, I fear he will be lost forever—and I have made up my mind to make him as happy as I can while he is here." They went away, and her husband said, "Do you really think I shall be unhappy forever?" "I fear so," she said, "I would to God you would repent and seek forgiveness." That night patience accomplished her desire. He was soon found, with her, on the way to Heaven! Yield on no point of principle, but in everything else be willing to bear reproach and to be despised and mocked for Christ's sake! "This is a hard saying," says one. I know it is, but Divine Grace can make the heaviest burden light and transform duty into delight.

Here let me also remark that to this gentle endurance there must be added by the persecuted Christian *much exactness of life*. We must be very particular when such lynx eyes are upon us, because if they can find us trespassing they will pounce upon us at once. If it is only a *little* wrong, a thing which they would not have noticed in anybody else, they will magnify it and raise quite a clamor about it. "Ah, that is your religion," they say, as if we claimed to be absolutely perfect. Be watchful, therefore. Walk

circumspectly, do not put yourself into their hands—let them have nothing to say against you except upon the point of your religion. Nothing soothes opponents like integrity, truthfulness and holiness—they long to speak against you, but cannot find a fair opportunity. Take care that you daily pray for Grace to keep your temper, for if you fail *there* they will boast of having conquered you and will assail you, again, in the same way.

Ask for Grace to be patient and say as little as you can, except to God. Pray much for them, for prayer is still heard, and how know you, O believing woman, but you may save your unbelieving husband? Only watch on and pray on, and a blessing will come!

IV. IN DOING ALL THIS WHAT COMFORT MAY YOU EXPECT? You may have this for your comfort, that *the persecutor is in God's hands*. He cannot do more than God lets him. And if God permits him to annoy, you may cheerfully bear it. Next, remember, if you keep your conscience clear it is a great joy. Conscience is a little bird that sings more sweetly than any lark or nightingale. Rough answers outside need not trouble you while within there is the answer of a good conscience towards God. Injure your conscience and you lose that consolation—preserve it from evil and you must be happy. Remember that by patiently enduring and persevering *you will have fellowship with the most grand spirits that ever lived!* You cannot be a martyr and wear the blood-red crown these days, but you can at least suffer as far as you are called to do. Grace enabling you, you may have a share in the martyr's honors. "Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you."

Remember, too, that if you have extraordinary troubles *Jesus will be doubly near to you*. This is the greatest comfort of all, for in all your afflictions *He is afflicted!* You will find His Presence in the ordinances to be very delightful. Those stolen waters which He gives you in secret fellowship are very choice. Those morsels which you get by stealth, how sweet they are! The old Covenanters said they never worshipped God with so much joy as in the glens and among the hills when Claverhouse's dragoons were after them. The living is very refreshing to the Lord's hunted harts. His bosom is very soft and warm for those who are rejected of all men for His sake. He has a marvelous way of unveiling His face to those whose faces are covered with shame because of their love to Him! Oh, be content, dear Friends, to watch with your Lord.

You have the sweet thought, also, that *you are doing more good* where you are than if you were placed altogether among the godly. Yonder light, set up in mid-ocean on the Eddystone Rock, see how the storm sweeps around it and the waters leap over it, threatening to put out its flame? But shall the light complain? Standing where it is, beaten by the Atlantic rollers and braving the full fury of the storm, it is doing more good than if it were set up in Hyde Park for my lords and ladies to look at. The persecuted saint occupies a place where he warns and enlightens and, therefore, suffers. He is like an advanced guard to whom the place of danger is the place of honor—only let him ask for strength to bear and forbear and he shall have glory at the last! Remember, the rougher the road, *the*

sweeter the rest. And the greater the suffering, the brighter the crown at the last!

Those who have to bear most for Jesus will be those to whom He will most sweetly say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter you into the joy of your Lord." Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if you have a little rough language to put up with, what is it compared with what many of the Lord's afflicted ones have to endure? I will tell you a little incident bearing upon that point and then have done. Yesterday the postman brought me, among many others, a letter from Australia, which I prize more than any that have come to hand for a long while. It has touched my heart. And when you hear it you will not wonder.

It is written at the desire of a man who is described by the gentleman who writes for him in the following terms—"I have known the writer for near eight years, during which time he has been quite helpless, being paralyzed. He has had one leg cut off, the sight has left his eyes and he cannot move hand or feet. As he is placed on his bed, so must he lie and endure the annoyance of flies or anything that may molest him. I am sure you will be pleased to know that you are the means of giving comfort to such an one, and he is mostly rejoicing. Few are more apt to teach and exhort those who come to see him and direct them to suitable portions of God's Word for their reading." Now this poor man, who has been helpless ever since the year 1858, or 16 long years, writes me thus—"Being moved by the Holy Spirit, I send you these few lines to thank you for the benefit I have received by reading your sermons.

"In the year 1850 I was brought to the knowledge of the Truth of God and found peace through believing in Jesus. In 1858 I met with a serious accident, so that I was not able to earn my bread, but trusting in the Lord He has led me in the right way. In 1866 it pleased Him to confine me entirely to my bed. I bless His Holy Name that I can say I am bound by the cords of His love, that He has upheld and comforted me through all my long confinement, and enabled me to rejoice in hope of His Glory. The reading of your excellent sermons, which privilege I have enjoyed for some years, having been a source of great comfort and delight to my soul—causing me to soar on high and enjoy sweet communion, I am constrained by love to send you this acknowledgment hoping that, perhaps, you may be cheered a little by it in your arduous labors—and if our heavenly Father sees fit, this, my testimony to His faithfulness, may be blessed by Him to the comfort and encouragement of some afflicted ones in your flock, as I know that *all* these things work together for good to them that love God."

Think of this unselfish sufferer having a letter written to comfort *me!* One would have thought he needed comforting himself, but the Lord so cheers him that, instead of asking for consolation—he does not mention in his letter that he has lost his leg, or that he is paralyzed, or has lost his sight—he only tells me of his joy and peace!

Now, if children of God in such extremities can yet bear testimony to His faithfulness, are you going to run away because some foolish person or other sneers at you? Will you in cowardly fashion desert the standard because fools point their fingers at you? If so, are you made of the same

stuff as the true saints? Have you the same backbone of Divine Grace as they? Assuredly not! May the Lord in His infinite mercy give you such a sound conversion that, whatever trial comes, you may still sing, "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord and glory in the God of my salvation."

If I am addressing anyone who has persecuted God's saints in any way, let me say, "Mind what you are doing! There are many things a man will bear—but if you meddle with his children it will stir his soul—that is a tender point with all fathers." Nothing provokes the Lord like interfering with His children. Mind what you are doing! And, oh, I pray the Lord, if you have done it ignorantly, really thinking them to be wrong and only scoffing at them because you thought them hypocrites, may He that spoke out of Heaven to Saul, and said, "Why do you persecute Me?" let you see that you have really been wounding Jesus, Himself!

May He make you see that those tears which you have forced from that faithful woman, and those sleepless nights which you have caused to that earnest man were so much of evil done unto Christ, for which He will reckon with you at the last. Turn unto the Lord Jesus and may the Holy Spirit grant you to repent of this, your wickedness, for Jesus is willing to receive and bless even you, as He did Paul of old. Believe on the Lord Jesus and you, also, shall be saved. God bless you all, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 4.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—76, 670, 667.**

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THE EMPTY PLACE—A CHRISTMAS DAY SERMON NO. 2288

INTENDED ON READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 25, 1892.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON A CHRISTMAS DAY EVENING.

*“And David’s place was empty.”
1 Samuel 20:25.*

THERE may be much to learn from an empty place. The world thinks much of the places which have been emptied through the home-going of its celebrated men. Those who have served the world are remembered by it. Those who have served the Church are remembered, too, and empty chairs in the world, in the Church, and in the family awaken a great many memories.

I do not intend to keep to one subject, tonight. I think I have, in these words about David’s place, a roving commission and, keeping to my text, I shall be able to consider a great many subjects and to speak briefly upon each.

I. First, then, let us think of THE EMPTY PLACE IN THE PERSECUTOR’S HOUSE—“David’s place was empty.”

David had good reason for vacating his place at Saul’s table, for the passionate king was so malicious and so embittered against him, that he sought his life. Saul had, on several occasions, in his fits of mad anger, hurled javelins at the man to whom he owed so much—and the envious king determined to put his rival to death at the first convenient opportunity! David, therefore, very properly left a place in which his life was continually in peril.

Oh, how happy are we, in these days, that we are not subjected to the fierce sufferings and the cruel persecutions which the early Christians and even our own forefathers had to endure! How often, in a Jewish family, as soon as a young man had become a follower of Christ, from that moment none of his household would acknowledge him. He was a follower of the hated Nazarene! “A curse be upon him,” said his father. And even a mother’s tenderness seemed to be dried up, so that she could not think of him without bitterness and gall. The same thing happened, also, in the old Roman families. The child of a Roman noble had stepped into some little place where humble and unlettered people met to hear the Gospel preached, to sing songs in the name of Jesus, and to keep holy, one day in the week—and there that youthful heart had learned the story of the Cross, and by the Grace of God had been brought to love the Savior. As soon as the fact was made known, the officers of justice would take the

child away from the father's house and haul the young Believer off to prison—and so another seat was empty.

When persecution grew very hot in the old Roman times, you know how the good, and the great, and the true, the strong and the old, the young man and the maiden had, alike, to flee for their lives. If they remained, it was only to be dragged before the Roman praetor and short work was made of them at the stake or in the arena. After a little while, nothing was left of them but a heap of ashes from the martyr fire, or a few bones that the wild beasts did not care to eat. Thus another "David's place was empty."

Horrible work was worked, too, when the Church of Rome had its full power, and the officers of the Inquisition, at dead of night, knocked at the door of some Christian man and demanded either himself, or his wife, or son, or daughter. They had to surrender themselves without a word, that they might be immured in the damp, dark vaults of that hellish institution, never to be seen again, except, on some dreadful day, when they were marched out, in derision, to be burnt alive because they would not bow before images of ivory and wood, and call those idols the Christ to whom homage and reverence should be paid! You know how it was in our own land—how many a seat was empty during the persecutions of Queen Mary. And after that, when our noble sires would not conform to the established Church of this land and, therefore, were hunted into the dens and caves of the earth, as though they had been wild beasts, instead of men of whom the world was not worthy. Many of the bravest and best of England's sons and daughters fled away to America and found another and a safer home there, in New England, where the wild rocks were less flinty than the hearts of men here in England.

Often and often, when persecution has arisen for the Truths of God's sake, David's seat has been empty. If martyr days should come back, could we vacate our places? Could the husband let his wife and children go for Christ's sake? Could the child, again, give up the father's love? Could you wrench yourselves away from all your dear ones to prove that you were truly Christ's—and that you loved Him better than father or mother, husband or wife, or any of your kin? God grant that the true martyr spirit may not die out of our hearts, even if, in God's gracious Providence, it is not called into terrible exercise as among the brave peasants of Switzerland, or the noble covenanters of Scotland, or the old Nonconformists of this country! At any rate, whatever we are called to endure, may we be true and loyal to the Gospel for which our fathers bled and died. And if the times of persecution should ever come again, and come they may, may we be ready, again, to vacate the place of comfort, luxury and peace for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake!

II. There is another place which sometimes becomes empty, that is, THE PLACE OF SINFUL PLEASURES. This empty place is the result of the working of God's Grace in the heart.

I know that concerning some here, it may be said, with very great thankfulness, that David's place is empty. Ah, dear Friend, where was your place, seven years ago, on such a night as this in our so-called Christian land? Ah, well, we do not want you to tell where it was, you had

better be silent about *that!* But, with a holy blush, and then with devout thankfulness to God, rejoice that, so far as *you* are concerned, David's place in the seat of the scornful is now empty! You know that the ale-bench would not suit you now, nor the place where the lascivious song awakens enthusiastic applause from the ribald throng—you would be out of place in the company of the flippant, the foolish, the blasphemous and those who find their pleasures in forgetting their God—and think it no sin to break though His Laws. No, thank God, that place is now empty!

Grace makes a wonderful change in a man! It is not so much that he dares not go where he used to find delight—he would not go if he were paid to go, no, not even if he were flogged to make him go! Old pleasures are not given up by us simply because we think them wrong. We know they are evil and that would be one reason for abandoning them, but we give them up because they are no longer pleasures to us. We have no delight whatever in them, now, nor would we have them if we were free to choose them for ourselves. Were the Law of God suspended and we were permitted to take as much of the pleasure of sin as we liked, we would decline to take any, since it is not pleasure to us. Oh, be thankful, dear Friend, that Grace has made such a change in you! And resolve in your heart that, as Grace has done this for you, you will use your utmost endeavors to get the same gracious work done for your friends, that others may be captured from Satan's ranks.

Oh, what a gap God sometimes makes in the devil's army when He takes one of his most active soldiers and enlists him in the army of Jesus Christ—and then makes a recruiting sergeant of him to enlist others for his new Captain! There are no servants of God like those who have been valiant soldiers of Satan! Saul of Tarsus, when once made into an Apostle, was not only not a whit behind the very chief, but we may venture to say that he was the very foremost of all the Apostles and did more for Christ than any of them! Oh, may many a David's place, among those who are seeking sinful pleasures, be speedily emptied by God's almighty Grace! And if the devil should fill it up with another of his foolish votaries, may God be pleased to empty that place again and again! May many, like Moses, choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

III. Now I shall speak of other empty places which are better than those I have mentioned. During the past year it has happened several times, to some of us, that David's place has been empty. I mean that, for a time, **THE PLACE OF OUR OCCUPATION HAS BEEN EMPTY.**

Perhaps some of you have not had a single hour's sickness during the past year. I will remind you of your mercies that you may be very grateful to God for them. Some of us have had days, some have had weeks, and some have had even months when David's place was empty. Not long at a time, perhaps, but usually some time or other during the year, this pulpit has had to be empty, so far as the regular preacher was concerned. Infirmities lay aside the preacher, for a while, at any rate, and with many here there comes, every now and then, a season when they have to be away from the chapel, and from the business, and from the family circle. And there is extra watchfulness in the household and there is special care, and

it may be that, sometimes, there is cause for anxiety and fear. Perhaps, in some of your cases, there has been much of necessary concern. Remember those nights when the fever was about to turn, those hours when there were anxious whispers by the loved ones around your bed, “Will he get over it? Can he survive?” You remember those trying experiences? I want you to remember them in order that you may bless the Lord who has spared your life, and raised you up, again, to health and strength. If David’s place has not been often empty, be grateful for the health that God has given you. If it has been empty for a while, but you are still in the land of the living, be grateful for the restoration which the Lord has granted to you.

But Brothers and Sisters, I want to ask you, and myself, also—are we rendering unto God due recompense for all that He has given to us? He has favored us with prolonged life—is that life being spent for *Him*? It may be that on that sick-bed we turned our face to the wall and prayed, in the bitterness of our spirit, and we then vowed what we would do if the Lord would spare our lives. Or, if we did not put it absolutely into the form of a vow, we resolved that if we were raised up, again, we would be more fervent and more diligent in the Master’s cause than we had been before. Have we redeemed those promises? Do I awaken any memories of shame? I think I should—I do in my own heart—and I should not wonder if I do in yours, also. If so, then let the prayer go up from each heart, “My Lord, You have redeemed me with Your precious blood and made me Yours. Your vows are upon me and I bring myself, again, to You on this last Sabbath night of another year, and I say, bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar!—

***‘My life, which You have made
Your care, Lord, I devote to You!’***

Show me what You would have me to do! Give me strength and wisdom to do it. Keep me diligently in Your service, steadfast in Your fear until David’s place is empty, here below, for the last time, and You take me up to fill another place which You have prepared for me at Your right hand!”

I thought it might be well to awaken these thoughts in the mind of those of you who are specially concerned in this part of my subject.

IV. During the past year, many of you now present have had A PLACE IN THE ASSEMBLY OF GOD’S PEOPLE.

I do not quite like to put the question about how often David’s place in the congregation of the righteous has been empty. I have very little need to ever say anything to you, dear Friends, about any lack of regular attendance upon the means of Grace. I think no people I have ever heard of are more commonly found listening to the preaching of the Word, or joining in religious service. Yet there may be some of you who have absented yourselves when you should have been present. Or there may be members of other congregations who have fallen into lax and loose habits with regard to forsaking the assembling of themselves together, “as the manner of some is,” even as it was in Paul’s day. Let any such who may be with us check those habits as soon as they begin. They are very detrimental to all spiritual growth. I do not think you will find a man in good health if he takes his meals at all sorts of irregular hours. As a rule, the body needs

its regular periods of receiving nourishment and sustenance—and it is the same with the soul. You will scarcely find a Christian to be in sound health if he neglects the appointed time for being fed with spiritual meat.

You who are unconverted should take special notice of this part of my theme. I think that I need not say very much to the Christian about attending the Lord's House, for he loves the place where God's honor dwells. He can say—

***“I have been there and still would go,
'Tis like a little Heaven below.”***

But as for you who are not converted, I delight to see you in the House of God, willing and even anxious to listen to His Word, for who can tell, who can tell, but what God may bless it to you? “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” When you are away from the sound of the preacher's voice, there seems less probability that Grace will meet you to awaken your conscience and turn you to Christ. While you are gathered with the Lord's people, I would hope that God will bless to your soul's salvation the Truth of God that is preached. Be often, then, in that place of worship where Jesus Christ is lifted up—and seek to obtain a personal interest in His great salvation.

I love to see you hovering round the Word, listening to the preaching of the Gospel, but do not, I pray you, let it always be true that you are only hearers, for, if you are only *hearers*, and not *doers* of the Word, you are simply destroying your own souls! Do you know what is your great danger, you who are hearers, only, and you who are not always hearers? You are running a fearful risk of losing your souls!

What I fear concerning some of you is that you will postpone your decision and wait, and wait, and wait, and wait till you will not feel as much interest as you now do in listening to the Gospel—and gradually you will come to the House of Prayer less often, and David's place will be more often empty—and, by-and-by, the Gospel will grow so stale to you and this poor voice of mine will sound with so dull a tone, and my message will seem so commonplace, that your seat will be found always empty! When this comes to pass, I fear that you will be found wandering further and further from the paths of right, and truth, and hope—and that you will be utterly and hopelessly lost. May God decide you for Christ Jesus before this year of Grace has passed away! May it be, even now, the year of our Lord to your soul, the year in which the Lord, Himself, shall come into your spirit and take possession of your entire nature! Then I know that David's seat in the assembly of God's people will not often be empty.

V. I have now to say just a few words, especially to the members of the Church, about THEIR PLACE AT THE PRAYER MEETING. “David's place was empty.” What was being done, then? “Well, it was only a Prayer Meeting!” Yes, but, but, but, but, but, but, that is saying a great deal! Did any member of the Church give that answer? I do not think even one would do so, but I would like to enquire of all the members of this Church, “how many times have you been to the Prayer Meeting this year?” There are some of you who are never away unless something absolutely prevents you from coming. I am glad, even, to see some of you come in late on Monday nights. If you cannot come at seven, come at half-past seven, or

come at eight! Come at any time that you can, so that you may but throw in your portion of supplication with the rest of the Brothers and Sisters.

But I am ashamed of some of our members. They will say, “Whom do you mean?” Last Sunday week, a little boy came to this Tabernacle for the first time. So, when I stood up and began to preach, the little fellow said to his nurse, “Nurse, is Mr. Spurgeon talking to me?” I wish you would all say that, if my words apply to you, for I am talking to some of the members of the Church when I say that I am ashamed of you who never come to the Prayer Meetings! I do not mean this rebuke for you who live at a very great distance, or who are fully occupied with your families or business cares—for you would be wrong to come. God forbid that I should ask you to present to Him one duty stained with the blood of another duty! But there are some who might be here, and *ought* to be here at our Prayer Meetings and they are spiritually suffering positive mischief in their own souls through their absence, besides the loss that they are causing to the treasury of the Church—for the wealth of the Church lies in the power of intercession!

The measure of the Church’s influence will be found to be in exact proportion to the amount of prayer presented by the members, for if there is not much prayer, there cannot be much power. “But we can pray at home,” says one. Yes, I know you can, but, as a rule, I think the people who pray at home are those who pray at Prayer Meetings, too. The assembling of ourselves together for prayer is very generally (special circumstances being taken into consideration) the exponent of our private prayer. Let me stir up any of you whose places at the Prayer Meetings have been empty, and let it not be so again.

My Beloved in the Lord, my fellow-soldiers in Christ, what has been the source and secret of our strength, as a Church, up till this time? It has been our prayer! How well do I remember what Prayer Meetings we had in Park Street! When we began we were so very few and feeble that, in most of the Prayer Meetings we had, we met in a little vestry. But we soon had to burst open our doors and get into the Chapel, and we have never gone back into the vestry since then! And oh, the power that the Lord graciously gave us in prayer! I felt there, and many of you felt, that we seemed, by our supplications, to bring down the blessing of God upon us! And then our numbers were speedily increased, souls were converted, and God was glorified!

If we slacken prayer, we shall condemn ourselves! We have proved, not by hearsay, but by personal experience, that prayer is power—and if we relax our prayer even to a small extent, or even for a little while, we shall deserve to have this place made a by-word and a hissing—and all our prosperity taken from us and Ichabod written upon our walls! May God grant that this voice may be silent in death before this people shall ever cease to be a praying people! Rather may our prayerfulness be quickened and our intercessions multiplied—and let it not be said of any men or women here who fear the Lord—that their place is empty when God’s people assemble together for prayer!

VI. There is another David’s place that is sometimes empty and that ought not to be so. IT IS THE PLACE OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, our gifts are various. God has been pleased to place us in different positions and to give us different talents. But every saved man or woman has some work to do for Christ. Are we doing that work? There is our Sunday school. It troubles me if I ever know that teachers are needed there. There are many other schools where members of this Church are occupied as teachers. We are supplying, I might say without any exaggeration, half the Sunday school teachers of half the denominations in the district, for I have always said to you, "Go anywhere that you can find an opportunity of doing good—never mind where it is. If you have ability to teach, go and teach in anybody's school where your services are needed." Yet there are some among us who hide their talents in a napkin and do not use them—and, as a consequence—there is some David's place empty.

You are not all called to the same work for Christ. I like to miss, tonight, some of those I saw here this morning, and I should not mind missing some of you for the same reason. Why? Because they are gone to teach in the Ragged Schools, or to speak at the mission stations, or in the lodging houses. When a Christian man says to me, "There are workers needed at such and such a Ragged School, or mission hall. I would like to be hearing a sermon, but I would rather be doing good than getting good," I say to him, "Right, my Brother, while London is what it is, you must be content to get one sermon a day and feed your soul on that—and then go and do all you can for your Lord the rest of the Sabbath." It would be well for the younger members of our Churches to be, for a time, in constant attendance on the means of Grace because they need to be instructed in Divine things. But every *instructed* Christian is bound to be a worker for Christ among the perishing masses all around us.

Seek to serve your Savior wherever He opens a door of usefulness. You need not go, tonight, into the street to preach, the weather is not suitable for open-air services just now. But when the summer comes, let every corner of the street have its evangelist and let every man, woman, and child who love the Lord, do the work He desires them to do! And let it not be said of any of us that, "David's place was empty." Oh, the joy of doing good! Brethren, next to Heaven, the greatest joy that can be found is the joy of doing good to others! Did you ever meet some poor man who said to you, "Bless your heart, you led me to the Savior"? Did you ever see a woman look you in the face with unspeakable love and say to you, "You are my father in Christ Jesus. You brought me to the Savior's feet"? If you once knew this joy, you would always be hungering after more of it! You would never be fully satisfied with what you have done and would be always wanting to do yet more and more!

I have tasted of this sweetness and I have found it so refreshing to my spirit that I would have every member of this Church taste of it, too. When our Lord reads the roll of those who are doing all the good they can in Sunday school, and Ragged School, and in preaching, teaching, visiting, tract-distributing, or what not, I hope you all will be able to answer, humbly but firmly, "Here am I, my Master, doing Your work as You enable me."

I believe that many of you will be doing Christ's work best at home. You need not teach in the Sunday school—you can have one in your own house. Many a daughter is better occupied in seeing after the younger ones of her own family than anywhere else. Yet with such exceptions as these, I beg you to take the general run of what I have said—I speak unto wise men, judge you what I say—and believe me that there is something to be done by each one who loves the Lord. You are not accountable to me, or to the elders of the Church—you are accountable only to the Crown Prince, the Prince Imperial of Heaven, Christ Jesus, our Lord! He has bought you with His precious blood. You are His. Then serve Him and let not your place of service ever be vacant through your neglect or indolence.

VII. Again, "David's place was empty." I hope that OUR PLACE AT THE LORD'S TABLE will not be empty at any time when it is possible for us to occupy it.

There are not any in this Church, known to me, who absent themselves from the Lord's Table very grossly. But still, there is room for improvement in this matter in the case of some of us. I like to go to that Table every week and my own solemn conviction is that that is none too often. If there is any rule about it in Scripture, there certainly is no rule for going once a month, much less for once a quarter! If there is any rule, it is that on the first day of the week, when we meet together, we should break bread in memory of our Savior's dying love! I commend it to our Brothers and Sisters to consider whether they keep the feast as often as they should, remembering our Master's wondrous passion and death. It may be that they lose much spiritual benefit because their place at the Lord's Table is empty—when it should be filled.

VIII. But I must hasten on towards the conclusion. Brothers and Sisters, tomorrow, when you will be keeping the Christmas feast, there will be many family gatherings. And in those family gatherings there will be SOME HOUSEHOLDS WHERE DAVID'S PLACE WILL BE EMPTY.

As I came here, I was thinking of what inroads death has made in this congregation this year. There have been many vacancies made and there will be many more next year. I miss from one seat, a Sister whom I saw upon her dying bed. And, from another part of the building, a Brother whose cheering words in his last moments did my soul good. I miss here, one, and there, another. I could run my finger along these pews in the area and I could come up on this platform, and I could truly say, concerning one who has been called Home this year, "David's place is empty." We can hardly say that *literally* because his son fills it, and long may he fill it, and have God's blessing resting upon him! But here and there, and everywhere in this Tabernacle, I miss some who have gone Home. Our family gathering is gradually breaking up. Thank God it is being reformed up yonder, where there will be no death and no parting!

When you get to your family gathering, perhaps you will have to remember that your mother has died this year, or it may be that your father has gone Home, or perhaps it was the eldest son, or that sweet curly-headed child. Perhaps, to-morrow, you will be merry and I do not say to you, "Be not so," but let these memories come over you, let them direct your thoughts upward, let them remind you that family gatherings are

only for a time, and that the great gathering is above! There the immortals meet, there the feast never ends! Look away from earth with all its joys. Let them that have wives be as those that have none. Let them that have children look on their children as dying ones. Let kinships and friendships, and all these things, be regarded as they are—as evanescent—as things that perish in the using. Hear the trumpet sound, “Up and away,” and let your hearts be where Jesus is—and let your treasure be there, also!

Those dear ones who are in Heaven beckon us to follow them and we signal to tell them that we are on the way. Surely they must look upon us with amazement if they see us hugging the things of earth as though we were to stay here forever! Let our conversation be in Heaven and let our affection be set on things above—not on things on the earth.

IX. My last reflection is this—THERE WILL BE NO EMPTY PLACE IN HEAVEN. In that great family gathering up above, they will not be able to say, “David’s place is empty.”

Beloved, if you are a believer in Christ, if you are the poorest saint and the least worthy of consideration in the whole household, yet you shall have your place in Heaven! You *must* have it, for God will not have one empty seat, there, and nobody but yourself can fill your place! Our Lord Jesus Christ says—mark His Words—“I go to prepare a place.” That is something. But note the next words—“I go to prepare a place *for you*”—for *you*, not for somebody else, but for *you*. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you must have the place which Jesus Christ has gone to prepare for you! There is a crown in Heaven which can fit no other head but mine. And there is a harp in Heaven out of which no other fingers but mine can bring music. There is a mansion in the skies which nobody but you can ever occupy and there are joys for you, only, and a place in the complete circle of God’s elect that must be filled—and must be filled by you. Oh, what joy is this!

Press onward, my Brothers and Sisters, go on bravely! If the darkness thickens and the dangers multiply, Christ is your life, and you cannot die! The everlasting wings shall cover you and the everlasting arms shall be underneath you. You shall meet us in the place where all the family shall be present and the great Father and the elder Brother shall welcome them all, and no, “David’s place” shall be empty! May I be there, may we all be there—and God shall have the praise! Amen and amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON PSALM 103.

Let us read, dear Friends, the 103rd Psalm, not because we do not know it, but because I trust that we know it by heart, and feel that it is a fit expression for our heart’s thankfulness on this last Sabbath evening of another year.

Verse 1. *Bless the LORD, O my soul.* He has been blessing you; now begin you to bless Him. If, during the week, you have been busy about the things of the world, now leave these unimportant matters and come to the

grandest exercise in which an intelligent spirit can be engaged. “Bless the Lord, O my soul.” Let there be no sleeping, now, no coldness, no indifference. Let it be real soul-work. His blessings have been real, let your praises be real, too.

1. *And all that is within me, bless His holy name.* Bless the whole of His name, and especially the holiness of it. Be glad that you have a holy God. There was a time when this was a terror to you, for you were unholy and unable to delight in God’s holiness, but He has cleansed and washed you, and now you can rejoice in the whole of His Character, in the wholeness, or the holiness, of His blessed name.

2. *Bless the LORD, O my soul.* Do it again. If you have praised Him, now, in your heart, lift up your heart yet higher. Let the praise come up from a greater depth, from the very bottom of your heart, and let it rise to a loftier height, even to the highest Heaven. “Bless the Lord, O my soul.”

2. *And forget not all His benefits.* You have a bad memory for good things, but now try to make your memory awake, forget not *any* of God’s benefits. If you can not remember all, yet do not willfully forget any of them—“Forget not all His benefits.” Here is a list to help your memory.

3. *Who forgives all your iniquities.* Can you not praise the Lord for this? One of those iniquities, like a millstone about your neck, would be sufficient to sink you into Hell, but God forgives them all! He does it, now, as much as ever He did. He still forgives, for the forgiveness of God to His people is a continuous act. Do you, then, continually praise Him and rejoice in Him.

3. *Who heals all your diseases.* None can set the human frame in order but He who made it. Medicines and physicians are of little service unless God blesses the doctor’s skill. Especially does the Lord heal *soul* sicknesses—and they are very many and very terrible. Bless His name that He continues to heal. As fresh complaints break out in your poor flesh or spirit, and your soul mourns over them, He comes and gives the healing balm.

4. *Who redeems your life from destruction.* Keeping you from the gates of the grave and, better still, delivering you from the jaws of Hell.

4. *Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.* The Lord has made a king of you, and what an empire is yours! And what a crown is this, which you wear! Other crowns make the head lie uneasy, but this is the softest, the best, the richest coronet that ever crowned head did wear! You may be content to keep it though all the Caesars should offer all their pomp to you in exchange for your crown—“He crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.”

5. *Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.* The mouth of man is very hard to fill. There are some men’s mouths that never will be filled until the sexton gives them a shovelful of earth, for they are covetous and greedy, and always hungry after more. But God has filled your mouth, not with earth, nor with earth’s treasure, but “with good things,” the very best things! The best of the best He has given you! All that your heart desires, in giving you Himself, so that your youth, when you grow old and feeble in your spirit, returns to you once more. Bless the Lord, then, for all these mercies.

6. *The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.* He lets the oppressor go on for a while, but, sooner or later, there comes a terrible retribution. There is nothing of oppression in this world that can live long, for God is abroad and oftentimes even the horrors of war make an end to the equal horrors of oppression. God interposes in dreadful judgments to execute vengeance on those that oppress the poor.

7. *He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.* Bless Him for this! Bless Him for the Old Testament Scriptures! Bless Him that He did not hide Himself of old, but did speak to His people, and reveal Himself by His Prophets, and by the types and symbols of the Law. Bless His name and study much the Revelation of His ways and acts, and get all the good out of it that you can.

8. *The LORD is merciful and gracious.* Bless Him, O my soul! Bless Him for this, for where would you have been if He had not been merciful? Where would you be if He were not gracious, giving Grace to keep you what you are, and to make you better?

8. *Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.* Blessed words! Any who are under a sense of sin will suck honey out of these choice expressions. “Slow to anger.” God does get angry, finally, when Grace has had her day, but He is “plenteous in mercy.”

9. *He will not always chide.* He will chide sometimes. He would not be a kind Father if He did not. That is a cruel father to His children who never chides them. This was Eli’s sin and you know how it brought destruction upon him and his house. Our Father takes care to chide us when we need it—but, “He will not always chide.”

9, 10. *Neither will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* Brothers and sisters, bless His name for this! Let every verse, as we read it, awaken fresh gratitude—and let us keep up the music of our souls in harmony with the language of the Psalm.

11, 12. *For as the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.* They are gone. There is a chasm between us and our sins which will never be bridged. To an infinite distance has the great Scapegoat carried away all the sins of His people—they shall never return to us.

13. *Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear Him.* The best of them need pity. There is something to pity in them and, because the Lord pities them, He will not lay too heavy a burden upon them. He will not demand too much of them. He will not give them over to their enemies. He deals tenderly with them because they are so weak.

14. *For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.* Sometimes we do not remember that, ourselves—we think that we are iron—and we fancy that we shall last forever. But the Lord “remembers that we are dust.”

15, 16. *As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.* Before even the mower’s scythe comes, the hot eastern wind has dried up the grass and it is gone. How little a thing carries

us away! It seems as if it did not need death to come with a sharp scythe to cut down such frail creatures as we are. He does but breathe upon the field and all the flowers are withered at once. Oh, that we might all be prepared for such a speedy end of our lives and not look upon this world as a place for a long stay, but only as the meadow in which we, in common with other feeble flowers, are blooming out our little hour!

17. *But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him.* Blessed be His name that mercy had no beginning and shall never have an end! You and I are of yesterday and, therefore, we pass away tomorrow. But God is always the same, and of His years there is no end, because He is without beginning—and such is His love to His people—eternal and unchangeable. Bless His name for this, dear Friends. Do not forget what is to be the accompaniment to the reading of the Psalm, but constantly bless the Lord, praise Him, and magnify His holy name.

17, 18. *And His righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep His Covenant, and to those that remember His Commandments to do them.* Bless Him for His goodness to our children. Some of us have seen the Covenant of the Lord kept to our children as well as to ourselves. May we all have that blessing in the case of all that spring of us!

19. *The LORD has prepared His Throne in the heavens; and His Kingdom rules over all.* Bless Him for His sovereignty! A God who did not reign would be no God to us! But “the Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice,” and let His people be glad because He “has prepared His Throne in the heavens,” beyond the reach of all man’s attacks or assaults. Beyond all time and change, the Lord reigns on forever and ever, “and His Kingdom rules over all.” It extends over all things that are on the earth, and above it, and beneath it—angels and men and devils are all subject to His sway.

20-22. *Bless the LORD, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His Commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word. Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts; you ministers of His, that do His pleasure. Bless the LORD, all His works in all places of His dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.* I think, before we pray, we must bless and magnify the Lord by singing Milton’s version of Psalm 136—

***“Let us with a gladsome mind,
Praise the Lord, for He is kind:
For His mercies shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.”***

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

END OF VOLUME 38

Pray that our Master’s Holy Spirit will keep Brother Emmett faithful in this work.

THE EMPTY SEAT

NO. 1454A

WRITTEN WHEN AWAY FROM HIS PEOPLE,
BY C. H. SPURGEON.

“David’s place was empty.”
1 Samuel 20:27.

IT was quite right that David’s place should be empty because Saul sought to slay him and he could not safely sit in the presence of an enemy who had twice before cast a javelin at him to “smite him even to the wall with it.” Self-preservation is a law of Nature which we are bound to obey—no man should needlessly expose himself to sudden death. It were well if many a seat were empty for this reason, for there are places exceedingly dangerous to the soul from which men should rise and flee at once. Where Satan sits at the head of the table, no man should tarry. There is the seat of the scorner, of which the Psalmist spoke—God grant that those who have occupied it may leave it in trembling haste. There is the settle of the drunkard, the chair of the presumptuous and the bench of the sluggard from each of which it were wisdom to depart.

May the Grace of God make such a change in all who have frequented the gatherings of the frivolous and the assemblies of the wicked that they may never be found in them again, but may be missed by their old companions who shall ask, “Why did the son of Jesse come not, neither yesterday nor today?” The javelin of temptation may soon destroy character, prospects and life, itself, and he is guilty of the grossest folly who exposes himself to it by placing himself where the arch-enemy finds chosen opportunities to work his deadly will.

At this time I shall use David’s empty place for quite another purpose and shall note, first, that in your assemblies at this time there are SEATS EMPTIED BY DEATH. Before I had left the shores of England for the space of two days I received the grievous intelligence that two out of the membership of my Church had been called Home in one day. Of a Sister, the wife of an earnest and well-beloved Deacon it must be said—her place is empty. And of a Brother who had been her friend and mine, the same expression must be employed. Our sympathies must now flow forth to a bereaved husband and also to a widow in whose hearts there are places sorrowfully emptied and in whose homes there will be an empty chair and an empty couch which will force from their eyes rivers of tears whenever they look upon them.

It is our firm hope and confident belief that in these cases the loss of the House of God below is the gain of the House of God above—they fill other and better places and even those who loved them best and miss them most would not wish to call them back again. Jesus wills that His own should be with Him where He is and we cannot deny that He has a right to have them. Do not their eyes behold the King in His beauty? Would we deprive them of the vision? May the thought of the bliss of the

departed yield solace to the surviving and may Divine consolations be richly given by the Holy Spirit in the hour of painful bereavement.

Our places will be empty soon and we shall be missed from our accustomed pews in the House of Prayer—let the seats which have been just vacated remind us of this and silently call to our remembrance the precept—“Be you also ready.” Use well your places for hearing the Gospel, for gathering at the Communion Table and for meeting for prayer while yet the opportunities remain to you, for the time is short and an account will have to be rendered. Love well those who are spared to you and do them all the good you can, for their places will not hold them forever. Cheer the aged, console the desponding, help the poor, for they will soon be beyond your reach and when you look for them you will be told that David’s place is empty.

Permit me also to remind you that among your assemblies there are SEATS EMPTIED BY SICKNESS for a while. You will not forget one place, the most conspicuous, which would be empty were it not filled by willing ministers who supply our lack of service. The Providence which empties that place is so wise and good that, though we cannot understand its object, we are sure that it will work for good and for the Glory of God. May I ask that, often as I am missed, I may have a fresh interest in your *prayers*, for these are a minister’s wealth and a pastor’s portion. Many others of the Lord’s family are also sick and detained at home. They sigh as they remember the happy days when they went up to the House of God in company and mingled in the solemn feasts of Zion—but for them there are now no more the thunders of our united shouts of praise, nor the deep Amens of our forms of prayer—and they envy the very swallows that build their nests under the eaves of the sanctuary.

Many of us have such afflicted ones in our own families and God forbid that we should cease to sympathize with them in their deprivations. Yet long continuance of health may dry the fountains of pity and lead to forgetfulness of the sorrows of others. Therefore it is no superfluity when we remind the healthy that there are others far less favored to whom it is one of their sharpest sorrows that their places at public worship are empty. Let us pray that a portion may be sent to their homes, according to the old Law of David, “as his part is that goes down to the battle, so shall his part be that carries by the stuff: they shall part alike.” Let us try to make this rule of battle a matter of fact by carrying home to the Lord’s prisoners as much of the sermon as we can.

Jacob did not go down at the first to Egypt, for he was aged and infirm, but his sons brought back corn for him, none the less. In telling the sick and bedridden the Truths of God which we have heard, our own memories will be refreshed. We are bound with those who are in bonds and we suffer with the suffering and, therefore, if we are living members of our Lord’s mystical body, it is to us a matter of personal interest that David’s seat is empty. In every well-ordered congregation there are SEATS EMPTIED BY HOLY SERVICE. Many Christian professors appear to think that their entire religious duty begins and ends with attendance upon the means of Grace—no village station receives their ministry, no ragged school enjoys their presence, no street corner hears their voice—but their pew is filled with commendable constancy.

We do not condemn such, yet show we unto them a more excellent way. We know scores of Brothers and Sisters who come to one service on the Sabbath for spiritual food and then spend the rest of the day in active labor for their Lord. They are not so unwise as to leave their own vineyard untended by neglecting personal edification, but when this is earnestly attended to, they hear their Master's call and go forth into the great harvest and use the strength which their spiritual meal has given them. In this way they are even more benefited than if they were always "feeding," for holy exercise helps their mental digestion and they all the more completely assimilate their sacred food! And, in addition, they have struck a blow at the spiritual selfishness which tempts us to enjoy religious feasts and to make ourselves comfortable while sinners are perishing around us.

Many are the Christians whose places ought to be empty during part of the Lord's Day—they are able-bodied and gifted and they ought not to eat the fat and drink the sweet all day long but should be engaged in carrying portions to those for whom otherwise nothing would be prepared. When the great king made a wedding feast for his son, he sent forth his servants into the highways and hedges to compel the wanderer's to come in. Did he starve those servants? Assuredly not! Yet he was not content to invite them to the table and leave the outsiders to hunger and faint. His servants found it to be their meat and their drink to do the will of him that sent them and to finish his work. Even so will Believers receive edification while they are seeking the good of others—like swallows, which feed on the wing—they shall find heavenly meat while they fly in the ways of service.

The Holy Spirit delights to give more "oil for the light" to those who are diligently shining amid the darkness. Yet, let me add a warning here—I have known some young Believers who have lacked prudence and have carried a good thing too far. Before they have well learned, they have been eager to teach and to do so they have ceased learning! Their multiplied engagements have left them no time for their own instruction and they have left an edifying ministry to enter upon labor for which they were not qualified. Wisdom is profitable to direct. The most of Christians need to fill their seats for a part of the Sabbath to hear the Word of God and *very few* can afford to spend the whole day in seeking the good of others. We grieve to meet with some who are absent from the Lord's Table for months because of their zealous occupations. This is presenting one duty to God stained with the blood of another!

It is the positive duty of every disciple to obey the Lord's command, "This do you in remembrance of Me" and efforts which necessitate neglect of the Divine precept must be curtailed. Often ought we to show His death until He comes. School teaching, street preaching, visiting the sick and so forth cannot be regarded as a substitute for hearing the Word and commemorating the death of the Redeemer! We must have time to sit at the Master's feet with Mary, or soon, like Martha, we shall be cumbered. Nevertheless, despite this word of caution, I am often glad to hear that "David's place was empty."

It is to be feared that too easily we could find SEATS EMPTIED FOR NO GOOD REASON. Ministers in many congregations are distressed by the irregular attendance of their hearers. A little rain, a slight indisposition, or

some other frivolous excuse will keep many at home. A new preacher has come into the neighborhood and the rolling stones are moved in his direction for a season to the grievous discouragement of the pastor. This evil of irregular attendance is most manifest at weekday services—there, often enough, David's seat is empty. No, not David's, for he longs to be even a doorkeeper in the house of his God—we mean the seat of Didymus, who was not with the Apostles when Jesus came—of Demas, who loved this present evil world and of many a Hearer who is not also a *doer* of the Word of God!

In many a congregation those who gather at meetings for prayer are shamefully few. I have no reason to complain of this as a fault among my own beloved people to any large extent and yet I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that there are some members of the Church who would have to carry their memories a long way back to remember what a Prayer Meeting is like. Little do they know what they have lost by their neglect. Ah, my Friend, does that refer to you? Is David's place empty? Then mend your ways and fill it! Of all soul-refreshing seasons, I have often found week-night services to be the best. Like oases in a desert, these quiet periods amid the cares of the week wear a greenness peculiar to themselves. Come and try whether your experience will not tally with mine. I believe you will find it good to be there.

Children, it is said, should be fed like chickens, "little and often," and to my mind, short, lively services coming frequently, on Sundays and week-days, are more refreshing than hearing two or even three long sermons on one day in the week only. At any rate it is good for us to keep the feast with our Brethren and not to make them ask, "Why did not the son of Jesse come either yesterday or today?" I must take the liberty of being very personal to the usual attendants at the Tabernacle. Dear Friends, do not let your seats be empty during my absence. I shall be distressed beyond measure if I hear that the congregations are declining!

The best preachers we can obtain are selected to address you and, therefore, I hope you will see no need to forsake your usual place. If you do so, it will reflect but small credit upon your pastor's ministry, for it will be manifest that you are babes in Grace, dependent upon one man for edification. "All are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas," and if you are men and women in Christ Jesus, you will get good out of them all and will not say, "Our own blunt Cephas is away and we cannot hear anyone else."

I beseech you be very regular in your attendance during my absence, lest those who preach to you should be discouraged and ourselves, also. Above all, *keep up the Prayer Meetings*. Nelson said, "England expects every man to do his duty" and, at this time, which is an emergency in our Church history, I would say—the Church expects every member to sustain all meetings, labors and offerings with unflagging energy—and especially to *keep up the Prayer Meetings*. There, at any rate, let it not be said of any of you, "David's place was empty."

Grace, mercy and peace be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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

BUT A STEP

NO. 1870

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 29, 1885.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON SEPTEMBER 13, 1885.**

***“There is but a step between me and death.”
1 Samuel 20:3.***

THIS was David's description of his own condition. King Saul was seeking to destroy him. The bitter malice of that king would not be satisfied with anything short of the blood of his rival. Jonathan did not know this. He could not believe so badly of his father as that he could wish to kill the champion of Israel, the brave, true-hearted young David. And so he assured David that it could not be so—that he had not heard of any plots against him. But David, who knew better, said, “It is certainly so. Your father seeks my blood and there is but a step between me and death.”

Now, it was by knowing his danger that David escaped. Had he remained as ignorant of his own peril as his friend Jonathan had been, he would have walked into the lion's mouth and he would have fallen by the hand of Saul. But to be forewarned is to be forearmed—he was, therefore, able to save his life because he perceived his danger. It would have been a very unwise person who would have said, “Do not tell David about it. You see that he is very happy in Jonathan's company. Do not disturb him. It will only make him fret. Do not tell him about Saul's anger.” But a true and wise friend would acquaint David of his danger, in order that he might seize the opportunity to escape. So also, tonight, somebody might say, “Many people now present are in great danger and do not dare to think about death. Do not mention the unpleasant subject to them.”

Well, Sirs, if my objective were to please you; if my desire were to seem as one who plays a merry tune upon a goodly instrument, I certainly would not speak to you of death and danger. But, then, it would be infamous to allow men and women to stand in infinite jeopardy and not to warn them! And it is kindness to speak to those who are carelessly at ease and tell them salutary truth. It will not put them in danger, but it may, God blessing it, be the means of their escaping from eternal ruin. So, I

pray you, while I talk upon this theme which may seem to be a sad one, ask God to make it a great blessing to those who, up to now, have been sporting upon the brink of fate without thinking of the solemnities of eternity.

It is rather a notable state of things, is it not, for David to be conscious of danger and to be telling his friend Jonathan that he is in danger? I do not often meet with the case! If I am the Jonathan, I have to keep on warning David of his danger, and I find it very difficult to wake up my friend to a sense of that danger. I would like to live to see the day in which David would come to Jonathan—I mean in which men in danger would come to me—and say, “There is but a step between me and death.” We love to see care for the soul and concern about a future state. Whenever God’s Holy Spirit is at work, we see it—sinners begin to be aware of their condition and they come and tell us of their danger and inquire for the way of escape. It is the simplest thing in the world to tell the awakened sinner how he may find peace—the difficulty lies in *awakening* the sinner!

To cheer those who are alarmed is such good work that we would sit up all night at it! We can never have too much of it! To bind up the broken in heart when the Master gives us His Gospel is the most pleasant duty out of Heaven. The worst of it is that we cannot persuade them that they need to be broken in heart, or lead them to feel that they are in peril—but still shutting their eyes to all the Truths of God, they will go wildly on, determined not to know. Too many act as if it were folly to look a few days ahead—as if it were a work of supererogation to foresee the evil—a needless sorrow to think of eternity!

Tonight I want to press the truth home, as far as it is the Truth of God, upon each person here present, that there is, or there may be, but a step between him and death.

First, *in some sense this is true of everybody*—“There is a step, and but a step, between me and death.” Secondly, *to some it is peculiarly true*. There are many persons—and some of them are here tonight—who might say with emphasis, “There is but a step between me and death.” When I have spoken upon those two things, I shall then ask, “*Suppose that it is not so?*”—and conclude by asking, “*Suppose that it is so?*”

I. First, then, there is a sense in which this text is no doubt literally TRUE OF EVERY MAN—“There is but a step between me and death,” for *life is so short* that it is no exaggeration to compare it to a step. Suppose that we should live to threescore years and 10, or even fourscore years, or to be, as some few of our friends are, here tonight, even past their fourscore years—yet life will occupy a very short time. Life is long to look forward to, but I appeal to every aged person whether it is not very short to look *back* upon! I confess to my own experience that a week is now a

hardly appreciable space of time to me. There seems to be very little breathing room between one Sunday and another. One has scarcely preached before one has to again prepare some other word with which to address you. As we grow older, time very sensibly quickens its pace.

I know that this is an exceedingly trite observation, but I mention it all the more earnestly because the certainty of it should force it home with power upon our minds. You young people look to a month as being quite a period of time, but when you are getting 40, or 50, or 60, you will look upon a whole year as no more than a brief interval. Indeed, I do not wonder that Jacob said his years were few. Because he was an old man, he thought life short. If he had been a young man, he would have said that his days were comparatively many and would have tried to make himself feel that he had lived a long while. But when a man grows old, his days seem fewer than they were—and the older he gets, the shorter his life seems to have been! There are many ways of calculating time and its length or brevity lies more in idea than in fact. I have sometimes noticed it—I dare say you have—that an hour has seemed to me very long, indeed. In certain states of mind I have looked to the clock again and again and I have thought that I never lived such a long hour.

But often and often does it occur to me that I sit down to write and that I go on writing—and when I lift up my head an hour has passed and I think to myself—“It cannot be. There is a mistake. Somehow that clock has made a mistake!” I have even referred to my watch and I have found that it was even so, but where that hour went, I do not know. When one is very busy, the hours glide away, so that you say, “Time is, after all, only a dream.” Time may appear to be long, while it is short, and it may be really short when, according to human calculation, it is long. But all men, when they come to die, confess that their life has been brief—that it was but a step. Yesterday I was born; today I live; tomorrow I must die! Ephemera are born and die in the space between the rising and the setting sun—their life is a fair picture of our own. We are shadows and we come and go with the rising and the setting sun. Truly, “there is but a step between me and death.” O my God, if my life is so short, prepare me for its end! Help me to stand ready for its close, so that I may give in my final account with joy.

But, in another sense, there is but a step between us and death, namely, that *life is so uncertain*. How unexpectedly it ends! Strong and hearty men, if I might make a judgement from observation, seem to be among the first to fail. How often have I seen the invalid, who might almost *long* for death, draw out a long existence of continuous pain—while the man who shook your hand with a powerful grip and stood erect like a column of iron, is laid low all of a sudden and is gone! No man can reckon

upon the full term of life—not one among us can be sure of reaching threescore and ten. We cannot be sure that we shall see old age! A bubble is more solid than human life and a spider's web is as a cable compared with the thread of our existence. There is but a step between us and death.

And this is all the more true when we consider that *there are so many gates to the grave*. We can die anywhere, at any time, by any means. Not only are we in danger abroad, but at home in security we are still in peril. I am in my pulpit now, but I am not secure in this citadel from all-besieging Death! I remember a dear servant of God in a country town, on a certain Sabbath morning, stood up and repeated as the first hymn of the morning, the sacred song which I gave out just now—

***“Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of Your abode:
I'd leave Your earthly courts and flee
Up to Your seat, my God”***

and he fell back and was gone! His wish was granted. He saw the place of God's abode, I do not doubt. There is no safety from death in the pulpit, nor in your own house!

Dr. Gill, who was noted for always being in his study, said one day to a friend, “Well, at least if a man is in his study he is safe.” Someone had been killed in the street through a falling chimney-pot or tile—and this gave emphasis to the doctor's pleasantry. But it so happened that, soon after, the doctor went to visit a member of his Church and while he was away, a stormy wind blew and blew down a stack of chimneys into his study—into the very place where he would have been sitting if he had not been called away. So he said to his friend, “Verily, I see I must not boast of being safe in my study, for we are secure nowhere.” In times of battle, men may shelter behind trees or walls, and so escape rifle-shot, but where can you get to escape from the arrows of death? Wherever you are, not alone in the crowded, thronging streets, but up there in your own chamber, or on the edge of your bed, you may slip, you may fall and suffer fatal injury! At your table you may eat and drink and die. Wherever you are, you may well feel, “There is but a step between me and death.”—

***“Dangers stand thick through all our path
To push us to the tomb!
And fierce diseases wait around
To hurry mortals home.”***

Therefore I would say, as I leave this point, let nobody here reckon upon life. Let him never postpone what ought to be done, at once, to some future time. I do not know whether any Brother here remembers old Mr. Timothy East. I knew him well in his old age. He was a man of careful observation and retentive memory and, in his later days, he was full of sto-

ries which had happened in his pastoral experience. He used to tell this one—A certain woman was very much attached to his ministry, but still a very foolish woman. She used to sit regularly on the pulpit stairs and she did so for many years, while Timothy East preached the Gospel. One thing seemed to shut her heart against all his appeals. She told a neighbor that if she had five minutes before she died, she so understood the way of salvation that she would get all right in that time. She told her minister that and Timothy said to her, “Oh, that will never do! You may not have that five minutes in which to set things right. Be right at once.”

Amazingly enough, one day as Mr. East went down the street, a child came to him and said, “Please, Sir, come and see Grandmother. Come and see Grandmother.” He turned in and there was grandmother struck for death. She looked at him with an entreating glance, and said, “I am lost! I am lost!” She died then and there, before Mr. East could say a word to her about her salvation. Dear Friend, I do beseech you not to imitate her folly, but rather say to yourself, “There is but a step between me and death. Therefore, now, God help me, I will lay hold upon eternal life and seek and find in Christ the salvation that shall fit me to live and fit me to die—and fit me to rise again and fit me for the Judgment Day, and fit me for eternal Glory.”

There is but a step between me and death. There shall not be a step between me and Christ.

II. But, dear Friends, I now turn to further remark that TO SOME, THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE. Will you bear with me when I remark that to persons who have reached a ripe old age this is most certainly true—“There is but a step between me and death”? It is inevitable in the order of Nature that you should not live long. Now, do not object to think about it and talk about it. It is only foolish persons who will not mention death. If you are all right with God, it can be no trouble to you to remember that as your years multiply, there must be so many the fewer in which you are to abide here below. Those also have but a step between them and death who are touched with some incurable disorder. Some are warned that they have a heart problem. If that is the case I may fairly say, “There is but a step between you and death.” If you are consumptive and are gradually melting away, you are in the same case. What a blessing it is that this form of death gives us notice of its approach and does not impair the mind, so that a person may calmly seek and find eternal life if that disease has marked him for its own! But there is only a step between the consumptive and death. Those who follow dangerous trades are in a similar condition. The traveler across the deep, the fisherman, the soldier, the miner and others are frequently at Death’s door. I need not go into the details of all those various processes by which men earn their bread which

have so much danger about them that there is but a step between those who follow them and death.

Besides this, there are some—and probably some in this congregation—who, whether it is by disease or not, will die in the course of a few weeks. The probabilities, if they are calculated, will show that out of six or 7,000 persons gathered here, there are certainly some, beyond all guesswork, who will not see the month of November—who certainly will never pass into the next year! There is but a step between such and death.

I should like you to be able to think about death. If you do not like to think about it at all, my dear Friends, I think that there is something wrong with you and you ought to take warning from your own dislike. He that is afraid of solemn things has probably solemn reason to be afraid of them. It is greatly wise to talk about our last hours. A man who is going to a certain place should think about the place to which he is going and make some preparation for it. If he is a wise man, he will do so. I should like you to attain to such a state that you could feel as Dr. Watts did. He said to a friend when he was an old man, “I go to my bed each night with perfect indifference as to whether I shall wake up in this world or the next.” That is a beautiful state of mind to be in. Or, as the old Scot minister said when someone asked him, “Is this disease of yours fatal?” and he replied, “I do not know, and I do not wish to know, for I do not think that it can make much difference to me, for if I go to Heaven I shall be with God, and if I stay here, God will be with me.” Oh, is not *that* a sweet way of putting it? There is not so much difference, after all, between being with God and God’s being with us!

Old George the Third, who, whatever the faults of his early days, was undoubtedly a godly man in his old age, would have a mausoleum prepared for himself and family. And when Mr. Wyatt, the architect, went to see him by his own order, he did not know how to speak to the old king about his grave. But George said, “Friend Wyatt, do not mind speaking about my tomb. I can talk as freely to you about the preparation of a place for me to be buried in as I could about a drawing room for me to hold my court in, for I thank God that I am prepared to do my duty if I live—and to sleep in Jesus if I die.” There are but few, I think, of his rank, who could talk so. But every wise man ought to see to it that, as he must die, he is ready for it—ready for the bar of God. “Ready, yes, ready,” says the sailor as he grinds his cutlass and let the Christian say the same! Ready, yes, ready, to live to an extreme old age patiently waiting, or to depart out of the world unto the Father which is far better! In any case, finding it Heaven enough to do the will of God and to trust in Jesus Christ whom He has sent!

Thus I have mentioned the cases of those of whom it may especially be said, "There is but a step between me and death." "Oh," said someone, "you are on the wrong side of 60, Mr. Jones." "No," answered Jones, "I am on the right side of 60, for I am on the Heaven side of it." And that is the way to look at our age. We say—

"Nearer, my God, to You,"

and then we do not like to grow old—that is absurd! No, let us rather rejoice that we are getting nearer the desired haven, nearer our everlasting rest!

III. I am to close by asking, first, SUPPOSE IT IS NOT SO? Young Friends, you that are here, suppose it is not true that there is only a step between you and death? Suppose it is not so? There may be some here that will live to a very great age. I may be addressing some persons who will rival Sir Moses Montefiore! Possibly you may. Well, what then? If so, I should recommend you to follow the Scriptural advice, "Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." The first things should come first—the best things should have the best of our thoughts. A prince who had been warned of assassination, gaily exclaimed, "Serious things tomorrow!" But before tomorrow he was slain. Yet had he not been slain, his speech would have been an unwise one for, however long we live, we ought not to push serious matters into a corner. If we are to live, let us live to noble purpose. It would be a great pity to lose a single year, much less a long life. If you are going to live a hundred years, begin them with God! If you are going to have long life, why not spend it for Him?

There was a storm at sea, once, and there was a young man on board who was not used to storms. He fell into a fearful state of mind. He was not of much use on board the ship through his fears. He crept into a corner and knelt down to pray, but the captain, on coming along, could not stand that. He shouted, "Get up, you coward, *say your prayers in fine weather.*" He did get up, saying to himself, "I only hope that I shall see fine weather to say my prayers in." When he landed, the words the captain said remained in his mind. He said, "That is quite correct, I will say my prayers in fine weather." I would say to you who hope to live a hundred years, *say your prayers in fine weather.* The young man was so impressed with those words that he went to hear the Gospel, was converted and became a minister of Christ! One Sunday morning, while he was preaching in one of the most notable pulpits in New York, that captain came into the Chapel and the preacher looked him in the face and said, "Say your prayers in fine weather." The captain was astonished, as he perceived that the very man whom he had addressed as a coward was now preaching from the pulpit and giving out, at the commencement of his

sermon, the advice which he had given him! I trust the captain took his own medicine!

I want to give that advice to all who do not think that they are going to die yet. *Say your prayers in fine weather.* Begin with God *now*. Oh, come and give my Lord Jesus the prime of your youth, the best of your days! I came to Christ when I was fifteen. I was a minister of the Gospel when I was 16 years of age. I have gone on preaching Christ ever since. I wish that I could have begun 16 years before! I do not regret of coming to Him so early and I urge you, young Friends, while yet the marrow is in your bones, your brain is clear and your eyes are true—before you have dishonored yourself and weakened your body by sin—come and yield yourselves up to Jesus Christ, that you may spend a whole life in that blessed service which is joy and peace! May the Holy Spirit of His great love make it so with many here present!

Suppose that it is not true that there is but a step between you and death? Nevertheless, while death is at a distance, health and strength furnish the best time for coming to Christ. Do not imagine that when you are ill and near death it will be the best time to turn. I remember the striking words of Philip Henry, the father of the famous Matthew Henry. When he was dying, his friends stood round about his bed and he said, “What a blessing it is, Matthew, that I have not to make my peace with God now! My body is full of pain and my mind is greatly disturbed by reason of it. Oh,” he said, “if that were undone and had *now* to be done, how could it be done?” What a mercy when that great transaction is complete! Now come pain or weakness, come long sleep, come broken-down spirit—what does it matter? It is all well! It is all well!

That having *to make our peace with God* when we die is a poor business. I do not like the expression. I like, far better, the language of a poor bricklayer who fell from a scaffold and was so injured that he was ready to die. The clergyman of the parish came and said, “My dear man, I am afraid you will die. You had better make your peace with God.” To the joy of the clergyman the man said, “Make my peace with God, Sir? That was made for me upon Calvary’s Cross 1,800 years ago and I know it!” Ah, that is it—to have a peace that was made by the blood of Christ all those years ago—a peace that never can be broken! Then, come life, come death, yes, or come a lengthened life and ripe old age, the best preparation for a lengthened life is to know the Lord! The best encouragement and comfort for the decrepitude of extreme old age is to have a good hope through Christ! There is nothing like it!

Why, some old folks that I have known, so far from being unhappy, have been the very happiest people that I have ever met with! And though they have lived long, they have come not to court long life, but they have

been willing to depart! Dr. Dwight, the famous tutor, had a mother who lived to be over a hundred years of age and, one day, when the son heard the bell toll for a neighbor, the old lady said with tears in her eyes, "Won't it soon toll for me? Will they not soon toll for me?" Dear Mr. Rowland Hill used merrily to say, when he got old, that he hoped that they had not forgotten him. That is how he came to look at death. And he would go to some old woman, if he could, and sit down and say "Now, dear Sister, if you go before I go, mind that you give my love to John Bunyan and the other Johns. Tell them that Rowley is staying behind a little while, but he is coming on as fast as he can."

Oh, it is a sweet thing to gradually melt away and have the tenement gently taken down and yet not to feel any trouble about it, but to know that you are in the great Father's hands—and you shall wake up where old age and infirmities will all have passed away, and where, in everlasting youth, you shall behold the face of Him you love! That is suppose that it is not so.

IV. But now SUPPOSE THAT IT IS SO? Suppose that it is so and suppose, as yet, that you have no good hope. Dear Friend, there is a word that I would like to drop into your ear. If there is but a step between you and death, yet there is only a step between you and Jesus. There is only a step between you and salvation! God help you to take that step to-night. You know the description of the way to Heaven—"Take the first on the right by the Cross and keep straight on." May you take that step tonight! It is not a step even, it is only a *look*—

"There is life in a look at the Crucified One."

Why delay it? Since faith in Christ will put you beyond danger and will put you beyond the dominion of sin, so that you will live a godly life which shall continue to the end, why not believe in Jesus now? Why not cast yourself upon Him now? For suppose it is so? Suppose that it is written in the book, "you shall die, and not live"—then is it not your wisdom that you should at once close in with Christ and find eternal salvation in Him?

Suppose that it is so, that you are soon to die? Then set your house in order. Get everything ready with regard to your temporal affairs. Mind that! A world of sorrow comes through people not having made their wills. Have everything in order. Trim the ship when a storm is expected. Be ready, for you are about to die. Now sit loose by all earthly things. You must assuredly part with them soon—do not hold them tightly. "Set not your affection upon things on earth," or you will weep when you lose your idols. If you harbor any anger in your heart, turn it out at once, for you are going to die. If there is any quarrel between you and anybody else, go home and settle it. Whether you are going to live or die, I advise you to do that. Hold no ill-will to anyone, for you are so soon to die. I remember well

the story of a husband who had grieved his wife. I do not know what had happened—some little awkward word or deed. He went out of the house. He had to fell timber that day and he turned back and said, “Wife, I am very sorry. Let us part good friends. Give me a kiss.” Alas, she turned away! All day long she sorrowed, for she loved him well and she grieved to think that he was gone without that kiss of love. He never came back again alive. Four men brought him home a corpse. She would have given a thousand worlds if they had not parted so!

Now, do not part with anybody that you love with any kind of tiffs or quarrellings. End all that, for death is near. If there is but a step between you and death—if the Judge is at the door—go and wind up your little difficulties. You that have family quarrels, wipe them out. You that have got any malice in your heart, turn it out. Oh, if it is only a step between us and death, then you that are unprepared, it is only a step between you and Hell! Escape, I pray you, by the living God! As you love your souls, flee for your lives and lay hold on Christ. But if you are in Christ, it is only a step between you and Heaven! You may well desire that you might take that step right speedily! I shall never forget one summer afternoon, when I was preaching in a village Chapel about the joys of Heaven, that an elderly lady sitting on my right kept looking at me with intense delight.

Some people’s eyes greatly help the preacher. A telegraph goes on between us. She seemed to say to me, “Bless God for that. How I am enjoying it!” She kept drinking in the Truth of God and I poured out more and more precious things about the Eternal Kingdom and the sight of the Well-Beloved, till I saw what I thought was a strange light pass over her face. I went on and those eyes were still fixed on me. She sat still as a marble figure and I stopped and said, “Friends, I think that yon Sister over there is dead.” They said that it was even so and they bore her away. She had gone. While I was telling of Heaven, she had gone there! And I remember saying that I wished that it had been my case as well as hers. It was better not, perhaps, for many reasons, but oh, I did envy her!

I am always looking for the day when I shall see her again! I shall know those eyes, I am sure I shall! I shall remember that face, if in Heaven she is anything like what she was here, or bears any marks of identification. I shall not forget that inward fellowship which existed between a soul that stood with wings outspread for Glory and the poor preacher who was trying to talk of that which he knew but little of compared with her. Well, well, it will soon be my turn. Good night, poor world! It will soon be your turn and then you shall say, “Good night.” Let us meet in Glory! Let us meet in Glory, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 90.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—853, 854, 846.

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CRAVING THE BEST THINGS

NO. 3122

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1908.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT UPTON CHAPEL, LAMBETH ROAD,
ON TUESDAY, MARCH 20, 1866.***

***“And David said, There is none like that; give it to me.”
1 Samuel 21:9.***

PERHAPS you remember the circumstances under which these words were spoken. David had been warned by Jonathan that Saul sought his life and, therefore, he left the court in a hurry and fled. He appears to have gone in such haste that he did not take proper provision with him—he did not even take his sword. Coming to Nob, where the priests dwelt, he received the sacred bread which had been offered to God as the showbread and he and the men with him ate thereof. And when he asked Ahimelech if he could furnish him with a weapon, he said there was no sword there save one, “the sword of Goliath, the Philistine, whom you slew in the valley of Elah. Behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if you will take that, take it: for there is no other save that here.” And David said, “There is none like that; give it to me.”

I am not going to spiritualize my text. I want to do nothing unfair. Let me use it as a slogan. You will all allow that apt words may be employed at sundry times and in divers manners. I will simply say that as a general principle, the conviction of excellence leads us to desire possession. “There is none like that,” is the conviction of excellence. “Give it to me”—there is the desire to possess. I shall illustrate this Truth of God in spiritual things upon some six or seven matters.

I. Speak of “the sword of the Spirit, which is THE WORD OF GOD,” and you may well say, “there is none like that.”

It is incomparable *in its Authorship*. We are persuaded that He who Inspired the Scriptures is none other than He who made the heavens and the earth, the God who cannot lie. All other books are but human at the best—let the authors be ever so refined—they cannot pretend to write as God writes. “There is none like that” for Authorship.

Nor is there any like it *for style*. You may read the Word of God through a hundred times, but you will like it best the hundredth time, for its stores are inexhaustible and its variety is charming. The style of any one man wearies you with its monotony till you need a change, but the spiritual mind never was and never could be wearied with the style of the Scriptures. It is sometimes simple, at other times majestic—here you have profound mystery and there the homeliest proverbs. It is all

through, however, so full of holiness and of Divinity, that there is none like it for style.

And certainly there is none like it *for matter*. What other book contains such a Revelation as this concerning Christ, God, time, life, death, eternity, Heaven, Hell? There is more matter, often, in a single page of Scripture than there is in a whole volume of human writing! And that matter is so true, so necessary for us to know and withal so comfortable, so rich, so blessed, that when we have searched the Word and gained a knowledge of God's testimonies, we can say with regard to the matter of it, "There is none like that."

As for *the effect* of God's Word in quickening the soul, in fetching back the wanderer, in giving peace to the troubled conscience, in cheering the Christian, in anchoring his spirit in time of storm, "there is none like that." Whether you consider the Author, the style, the matter, or the effect—in all points the Word of God stands first and foremost.

The conclusion, therefore, that I draw is, "*Give it to me.*" Oh, give it to me that I may read it constantly night and day! Give it to me, that I may understand it, prying into its secrets! Give it to me! O Holy Spirit, re-write your Book upon the fleshy tablets of my heart! Give it to me, that I may call it mine, grasping it with the hands of faith! Give it to me, that I may feed upon it with the lips of love, that I may receive it into my experience! Give it to me, that I may carry it out with faith in the actions of my life! There are some who are bent on taking away the Word of God. Well, if *they* discard it, "*Give it to me.*" There are some who want to put it up on the shelf, as a thing that has seen its best days. *They* suppose the old sword is rusty and worn out, but *we* can say, "There is none like that; give it to me!"

II. I shall have no time to enlarge upon this subject, so I must give you much in little. Therefore I pass on to another instance of the conviction of excellence with regard to THE SALVATION WHICH IS PROVIDED IN CHRIST JESUS.

All of you who are acquainted with the salvation that is in Christ will confess that "there is none like that." Beginning with that which always must lie at the root of all Gospel, *the precious blood of Jesus*—where can there be found anything like that? The blood of the Son of God, shed in so remarkable a manner, with sufferings so extraordinary, having about it a voice so loud which "speaks better things than that of Abel." The blood which, when sprinkled upon us, enables us to boldly enter into that which is within the veil. The blood which, when sprinkled upon our door posts, preserves us from the destroying angel. The blood in which, if we are washed, leaves us whiter than snow, so that "neither spot nor wrinkle" can remain on those who have received the Atonement of our Lord—there is no blood like that! Search the world round and you will find that there is no truth so consolatory as the Truth of God of the Substitution of Christ and His suffering, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

Then, *as for His righteousness*, which is as much concerned in our salvation as His blood, “there is none like *that*.” The righteousness of *Adam* in the Garden, with all its perfection, was still liable to come to an end, but the righteousness of Christ can never be altered. The former was only human righteousness at the best, but ours is Divine Righteousness, “the Lord our righteousness,” Jehovah-Tsidkenu. Oh, the beauties of *that*! Saints in Heaven sparkle like the sun when they put on this glorious array. Not Christ, Himself, on Tabor’s mountain shone more lustroously than will poor sinners shine when they are covered with the righteousness of Jesus Christ! “There is none like that.”

And then, where the blood of Christ has washed, and where the righteousness of Christ is imputed, there comes as a matter of necessity, “*the peace of God, which passes all understanding*.” Those who are in the enjoyment of this peace will tell you that “there is none like that.” The peace which comes from carelessness is without foundation. The peace that comes from ceremonies soon departs in the day of trouble. The peace that rests upon self-righteousness is based upon the sand. But the peace that rests upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ will outlast all time, endure the shock of trouble and land us in Heaven to enjoy peace forever!

Sometimes this peace breaks forth into joy and I may say especially of the joy of new converts, “there is none like that.” If you ever walk down the streets of Mansoul on the day when the King Emmanuel is coming out, you will see the banners waving from every window and the bells in every steeple making the spires to rock. You will see the people with gladness in their faces wearing “beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning,” and then will you say, as you hear them clap their hands and shout together, “The King is coming.” “There is no joy like that.” But always in “the love of our espousals,” we thank God that we find it joyous. There is no joy out of Heaven that is like the joy of pardoned sin, the joy of finding Christ, the joy of having our feet upon a rock. Then do you not say directly, “Give it to me”? Some of you have got it and I know your prayer is still, “Give it to me, give it to me to know more of it. Give it to me to enjoy it more. Give it to me every day—let me have it like the manna from Heaven every morning. Give it to me in all its fullness. Lord, there is none like that, give it to me!”

And are there not some of you who have never had it? Do you not agree with me that to be covered with Christ’s perfect righteousness, to have peace with God and to rejoice in our Lord Jesus Christ is a most precious thing? Do you not say, “Now, give it to me”? Well, then whisper it in the Master’s ear—say to Him, “Lord, give it to me! Here is an empty hand waiting for it, fill it. Here I am, Lord, sinful and black, but You have precious blood—give it to me and make me white. I am naked, I have nothing to cover myself with—but You have a perfect robe, give it to me. Cover me with it. Here I am, Lord, heavy-laden, bowed down with grief, but You have peace to give—Lord, give it to me. Here is my heavy heart, like a broken lily, withered and dying—Lord, You can freshen it up and

give me joy instead of sorrow! Lord, give it to me!” You see, this is not a prayer for a number of people—it is a personal prayer for each one to pray—and I hope each one of you will pray it now.

III. But we must pass on to a third illustration of the principle of the conviction of excellence which leads us to desire to possess. The third illustration shall be found in UNSTAGGERING FAITH.

Those of you who have enjoyed this will know that there is nothing like it in all the world. For, first, *unstaggering faith grasps the promises*. Ah, how often have I wished I could do so! I have seen some Christians taking hold of God’s Word just as they found it, being, as the saying is, “as happy as the birds in the air,” and never troubled about its Providential arrangements. Now, unstaggering faith, when it gets a promise, treats it as a winepresser does the grape when he treads upon it till the sweet juice comes forth.

This mighty faith, when it comes to prayer, takes a promise with it and makes a step in advance—*it gets the petition which it desires*. Unstaggering faith comes down from the closet crying, like Luther, “*Vici, vici*. I have overcome, I have conquered!” God grants the desire of unstaggering faith. It delights itself in the Lord, so the Lord grants it the desire of its heart. There is nothing like faith to pray with—it handles the promise in a masterly manner and gets its desire.

The consequence is that unstaggering faith, in daily life, *practically removes every difficulty*. “Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain.” Where Little-Faith is stumbling over every straw, Great-Faith is not afraid to go through the river, since Christ is with it, nor afraid to climb the mountain, since God beats the mountain as small as chaff when faith uses the flail.

And, certainly, as difficulties are removed, this unstaggering faith *preserves a perpetual serenity*. Let—

**“Earth be all in arms abroad,
Faith dwells in perfect peace.”**

It leans upon its God with a sense of His unfailing goodness when the desert around is dry, while the parched souls that lean upon an arm of flesh become like the heath of the wilderness!

I think, if I had mentioned only these four things concerning unstaggering faith, you would say, “There is none like that.” It grasps promises, wins positions, overcomes difficulties and lives in perpetual peace. What then? Why, “give it to me.” O Little-Faith, do you not say, “Give it to me”? Perhaps you have been in Giant Despair’s castle and you have thought he would surely devour you. But if you could get hold of this Goliath’s sword, you might soon have the giant’s head in your hand! If you keep better company, if your spiritual lungs take in more of the air of Heaven, there is no reason why that little trembling faith of yours should not grow into strong faith, for the promise is as true to you as to any other. You are as much a child of God as any other. God is as willing to answer your prayer as the prayer of any of His people. He is as true to you as He is to others. He “waits to be gracious.” I hope before you go

home you will say of this strong faith, "There is none like that; give it to me."

IV. The fourth thing is one which I think equally as precious as any I have spoken of, and that is A LIFE OF NEAR AND DEAR COMMUNION WITH CHRIST.

There may not be many here who have enjoyed it, for it is not given to all God's people to live in this center of true religion. The higher life is neither known nor possessed by all the saints, but those who do know and possess it will tell you that "there is none like that." A man who gets into close communion with Christ is sure that his soul is saved. He does not sing—

"'Tis a point I long to know."

He used to sing that once, but now he knows better. He knows he is beyond that and now he can sing—

***"Now rest, my long-divided heart—
Fixed on this blissful center, rest."***

He no longer has to question whether he has repented or whether he has believed. He has brought forth "fruits meet for repentance," and his belief is proved by his works. He has attained to the full assurance, not of hope, though that is a good thing, nor of belief, though that is also a good thing—but the full assurance of *understanding*—and there he stands, enjoying the confidence of his union with Christ.

Next to this assurance of his soul's safety, there comes *the enjoyment of Christ's love*. He not only *knows* that Christ loves him, but he *feels* it. The love of God is not now like "precious ointment" within the case, but it is "shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit." It is like the ointment from Mary's alabaster box when it was broken. He can feel the love of God in his heart. He has no more doubt now of the love of God to him than of his own love for his child! At times it seems to weave itself into his very consciousness and he can say, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house and his banner over me was love." He has tasted and known, and felt the dearest communion of the Savior's love—and he can truly say, "There is none like that." Some of you have—perhaps, read the life of Madame Guyon and have said, "Ah, there is none like that." You may have read the spiritual letters of Rutherford and said, "There is no life like that," or the works of George Herbert and felt inclined to say, "There is no spirit like that; give it to me." Your spirit has often said, "Give it to me." Oh, that I might get it! I would rather lie sick upon a bed of pain from now till my Master's appearance than be employed in the preaching of God's Word if I cannot have my Master's Presence with me! I can hardly look upon some hours that I have spent upon earth as being a part of my mortal life at all. They seem to have been fragments of my immortal existence, cropping up of the new life, little pieces of Heaven, stray notes from angelic harps allowed to wander here below as earnest of the "rest which remains for the people of God." Let us each one pray, "Savior, give it to me! There is none like that; give it to me."

V. But I must pass on. The bee is in a field that has many flowers in bloom and must fly from one to another. THE POSSESSION OF SPIRITUAL POWER—THE POWER AND INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT—is another most precious thing concerning which, I trust, we have a conviction of excellence which will lead us to desire its possession.

Do you know persons who possess this spiritual power? If you do not, I will tell you where you will observe it. *There is a secret, mysterious power about their private lives.* Not that they expose their private lives to observation, for they have a hidden life which they know cannot be seen and which they desire to be hid with their Master. Still, in their families, in their most private actions, there is a shadow which you can see. And if that shadow, like the shadow of Peter, has healing influence about it when it falls upon you, you will observe it and wish your influence were like it. You perceive by it that they have “been with Jesus,” and have learnt of Him.

This power shows itself in their public work. They may be preachers and if God has given them spiritual power, their ministry is very fruitful in conversions and generally blessed in edification. When you listen to them as they speak upon a point of Doctrine, you feel that they are dealing with a thing which they have handled and tasted, and felt. They have seen the evidence of these things in the Holy Word and they speak what they know, and testify what they have seen. If they happen to be Sunday school teachers, if they happen to be missionaries, or whatever is their occupation, you see that while others are using little hammers, tapping the nail on the head and failing to drive it home, these have energy and might and drive the nail home almost with a single stroke, and clinch it with the second! While others are talking of what they would like to do, these men do the thing! God is with them. They are “workers together with God,” and you can see the result of their work because there is power—such power as God gave to the Apostles at Jerusalem—resting upon them.

This power often shows itself in a Church. I want to get you to pray for a public blessing, for a whole Church may get this spiritual power. Look at the Prayer Meetings, how well they are attended. Look at the various societies, how earnestly they are conducted. Look how the young men and women are seeking to bring in others; how the matrons are mothers in Israel; how the old men are fathers in Christ. Oh, it is a blessed thing when a whole Church is alive! One may blow the coals so well that they may touch a Prophet’s lips, but a whole mass of coals together—what a conflagration of Divine Grace may this cause throughout the world! Oh, that all our Churches had power from on high! Then would come revival seasons, *true revivals*, when everything would be full of holy joy and vigor and the Kingdom of Christ would grow and His arm revealed! You are sure to see the effect of this power in the Church in the blessing of the world, for the Church that is revived soon tells upon the neighborhood! If there is a great fire, you may see the blaze of it a long way off, and so if there is a fire in the Church of God, the blaze of it must be seen by the

world! You bless the neighborhood where you are blessed in yourselves. With regard to this spiritual power, “there is none like that.” We may preach new doctrines, or use fine music, or try to build our edifices so as to make them attractive, but oh, when we come to spiritual power, “there is none like that.” I think I can hear all the members of this Church and members of other Churches who are here, say, “Give it to us, Lord, give it to us now.” I am persuaded that we might exercise this power more, but we sometimes think that this sword of Goliath is laid up before the Lord and is never to be used—that this shaking of the dry bones, this fire from Heaven running along upon the ground, is a thing to be read about and dreamt of, but not to be possessed and seen! O God, show that You have not changed Your ancient prowess! O arm of the Lord, be You made bare again! Let this be our constant prayer, “There is none like that; give it to me.”

VI. I want to speak so as to touch some who are not yet converted and I think I must use another illustration of the principle which leads wise men to desire possession, namely, The PRIVILEGE OF THE CHRISTIAN.

Every Christian who possesses this privilege will tell you that there is nothing like it in all the world. What is a Christian? Well, first, *he is a son of God*, an heir of Heaven, a prince of the blood imperial, one of God’s aristocrats soaring right above the common level! He is as much above other men as other men are above brutes. He is a man of a new race—he does not belong to this world—he is an alien, a stranger! His citizenship is in Heaven! He can look up to God and say, “My Father.” The Spirit of adoption is in his heart.

The Christian knows that *he is “accepted in the Beloved.”* He knows that whatever he does that is right, God accepts through Jesus Christ. He knows that his prayers are accepted, that his vows are accepted, that his good works are accepted, that his very sighs, groans, tears, wishes and heartbroken desires are all accepted. God accepts them all as men accept love tokens from dear friends. He takes our poor withered forget-me-nots and treasures them up. We are accepted, altogether accepted, in the Beloved! The Christian is *a man who is quite secure*. There is no fear of his ever sinking into Hell. A jewel of the Redeemer’s crown shall never be cast to the swine, that they may tread it under foot. Christ’s blood-bought one is safe forever. Therefore he is not afraid. He believes that he has entered into the heavens with Christ and taken his seat at the right hand of Christ, his Covenant Head with whom he is in personal union. There is no life in the world like a Christian’s—there is no standing like his—there is no position like his. There is no person in the world that you can imagine who has such a life as his—watched over by angels, provided for by the bounty, and guarded by the Omnipotence of Heaven—what more can he want? “There is none like that.”

And now, Sinner, does not your heart say, “Give it to me. Let me be treated as You treat the rest of the family. Do unto me as You use to do unto them that fear Your name”? There is a gate to God’s heart and that gate is not shut! And by the way we came into that heart, dear Sinner,

you may also come! “I am the Way,” says Christ. If you look to Him bleeding, suffering, bearing the guilt of man, you are accepted, for looking to Jesus is a token off your being “accepted in the Beloved.” But never be satisfied with merely knowing what is the privilege of a Christian, try to get it! “There is none like that; give it to me.”

VII. Only once more on this point. Mark THE CHRISTIAN’S HOPE and may we not justly say, “There is none like that”?

What is the Christian hoping for? *He is hoping for the Lord’s coming.* He is hoping that the Master will reign upon the earth right gloriously. And sometimes he thinks that perhaps he may never see death, for he knows that there are those who will remain on the earth at the coming of the Lord and who shall not fall asleep. But if he anticipates death, yet he has a good hope *that they also who sleep in Jesus will the Lord bring with Him.* His hope is that his disembodied spirit will see the Savior before his body shall rise from the dead and that in the intermediate state between now and the resurrection, his soul will be in Paradise. As to his body, he has a hope that the Judge will come and the trumpet sound and he even says within himself, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” He has a hope of return for his soul, and of resurrection for his body—and after death and *after resurrection comes the judgment. But he has a good hope even concerning that,* for he hopes to hear the Master say, “Come, you blessed!” He hopes to stand at the right hand of the Judge, and to sit with Christ upon His Throne, to dwell forever with the Lord! And his soul often sings—

**“Amen, so let it be,
Life from the dead is in that word,
‘Tis immortality.”**

And I know that everyone, saint or sinner, even though he is as base as the wicked Prophet Balaam, will say, “There is none like that; give it to me.” But you cannot die the death of the righteous unless you live the life of the righteous! Nor must you expect your last end to be like his unless you begin where he began—with Christ. I would to God we had half as much desire for this best of all things as we have for the things of this world. If there was an advertisement in the newspapers saying that there were guineas to be given away at a certain chapel tomorrow morning, what a crowd we would have! But now, when information has been spread abroad that salvation is to be had, though it is admitted on all hands, “that there is none like that,” yet how few say, “Give it to me! Give it to me!” But oh, if you do say so from the heart, you shall hear God’s answer, “I have given it—take it and go your way!”

And now, dear Friends, will you follow me a little further while I point out that as the conviction of excellence leads us to desire possession, so SPECIAL SEASONS INTENSIFY THIS DESIRE?

David particularly wished for Goliath’s sword on this occasion because he had not any other. He was quite willing to take this sword because the

priest very significantly said, "There is no other save that here." Therefore David was the more ready to appreciate the excellence of the sword because it was the only one there was, and to say at once, since he needed it so badly, "Give it to me."

In times of conviction of sin. In times, too, of a sense of ignorance, a man says of God's Word, "Give it to me." As long as you think you are very wise, you will do without this Book. When you begin to be wise and find out that you are a fool, then you will say, "There is none like that; give it to me." You will be satisfied with other men's books till you find out that they are false. And when you have found that out, you will turn with love towards this volume and say of this Gospel Truth of God, "There is none like that; give it to me." In times of conviction of sin, you will feel regard for the Revelation of Jesus Christ. That man who does not value Christ can never know his own condition. I say, Sirs, if God would strip you. If He would lay the terror of the Law upon you. If He would tie you up to the Halberts and beat you with the ten-thonged whip of the Law, and then scrub you with the brine of conviction of sin and make your flesh tingle with anguish, cast you into prison and break your back with Giant Despair's crab tree cudgel, it would bring you to know your own condition and you would say, "There is none like that." A naked man prizes a good suit of clothes and a hungry man has a keen appetite for a good feast. And so, when a soul gets a sense of sin, oh, how he prizes the Savior! He then says, "Christ for me!" "There is none like that! O God, give it to me!"

In times of trial, too, the Christian knows the value of the faith of which I spoke to you. A man without trials may live without faith. With a good fixed income coming in, a prosperous business, the children all healthy and everything going on as you could wish it, you can put faith by in its scabbard and let it rust a bit. But when business declines, a child dies, you are sickly, troubles gather around your head and you know not where you may soon have to fly, you say, "Ah, now I must seize faith." You are glad of your umbrella when it rains—and times of trial make us cling to our faith.

If ever you get into spiritual darkness, dear Friends, it is then that you begin to prize communion with Christ. When the Lord hides His face from you, then, like the spouse, you begin to seek Him through the streets and to say, "My Beloved, where is He?" While in the enjoyment of Christ's Presence, you grow secure and when He comes knocking at the door, you say, "I have taken off my clothes," and you let Him stand outside till His locks are wet with dew. But when your Beloved withdraws Himself and goes away, then you seek Him, beating your bosom and crying, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" Ah saints, if we once get into the darkness, then we know the value of the Sun of Righteousness! And when the night is dreary and grim, it is then that the Star of Bethlehem becomes "our life, our light, our all," and "conducts us to the port of peace."

I think it is also *in the times of labor* that the Christian knows the value of spiritual power. If he has much to do and but little strength to do it with. If he does not see success attending his efforts, then he begins to cry out for the power he sees in others. “O Master,” he says, “I have been sowing seed, but it never comes up.” And then it is that he cries for spiritual power. He then seems to have Baxter’s disease and would like to have Baxter’s power—and he would take Calvin’s 70 sicknesses at once if he might have Calvin’s 70 times powerful heart! He feels that he would give up all pleasures if he might but be endowed with spiritual energy. “There is nothing like that,” he says—“give it to me.”

And it is also *in times when the soul is impressed as to the vanity of mortal things* that it rejoices in Christian privileges—and those times are growing with some of us. I am young compared with many of you, but I feel old to what I was a little while ago. I have a sense of death about me every day. I do not think there have been five minutes during the past year that I have been without a sense of mortality. Then I have begun to look at everybody who goes by as a wonder that he is alive and to look upon all the world as not being worth anybody’s caring for. I would not live here always. I have a strong appetite for Heaven and I think many of God’s saints, as they grow in age, find it so. They care less and less for this world because they recognize that there is nothing here worth caring for! At such a time I am sure you can say of Christian privileges, adoption, acceptance, and union with Christ, “There are none like these; give them to me.” There, dogs, you may have the world if you like, and snarl over that dry bone, but as for me, give me Christ! Give me to know true union with the Lord Jesus Christ! “There is none like that; give it to me.” I rejoice more in the Lord my God than in all the corn, wine and oil which make the rich so glad, and the proud so happy. There is nothing like spiritual privilege! Give it to me!

It is also *in the time of death, or sickness supposed to be fatal*, that we begin to see the value of the Christian’s hope, and to say—

**“When the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, ‘tis now!”**

You cannot look forward to dying in itself without a shiver. Death is not, and never can be, congenial to our nature. We are—

“Fond of our prison and our clay.”

I have heard of one of whom a minister said, “She died full of life.” That is the way to die—full of life and immortality—having so much of life that it swallows up death! “Death is swallowed up in victory.” One of our grand old Puritan divines, when he was close upon dying, was busy working at his book and his friends said, “You are dying,” and advised him to rest. But he said, “No, I will not slip to bed to die. I will die in my chair.” And he sat up and sang to the last. Haliburton seemed to be anticipating the time of his death when he exclaimed, “Have at you, Death, have at you! I have no fear of you!” It is then when we shall feel, concerning the Christian’s hope, “There is none like that; give it to me.”

Well, dear Friends, many of you endorse the prayer, "Give it to me," but some of you ask the question, "Shall we get it?" Let me, therefore, put before you a few of the many ENCOURAGEMENTS THAT SUPPORT US IN THE BELIEF THAT THE DESIRE WILL BE GRANTED.

Why is it that we believe our desire will be granted? Let every Christian and every unconverted person who is seeking the Lord listen to these few remarks. Other saints have received that which you are desiring. They have received salvation, strong faith, communion with Christ and spiritual power. When another receives those blessings, that should be an argument and encouragement for you to press your suit. A man who never gives anything is the worst person in the world to beg from, but he who has given in the past will probably continue to give. There is no heart so generous as the heart that has already given—it will still give. God has blessed millions of others—hosts beyond all counting! Then why should He not bless you? Lord, You gave to others, give to me also!

Evidently the gifts we are seeking are supplied in the Covenant of Grace. There is provision made of all the matters I have been talking about. It pleased the Father that in Christ should all fullness dwell—so that there are in Christ, not only the common gifts, but the special gifts of which I spoke just now—and they are all in Him in full measure! Then why should they not be given to you? Since they are all provided, doubtless they are not provided in vain. It is just what common sense would teach us—if a man provided a large quantity of soup in his kitchen, anybody would imagine he intended to give it away! And if a lady like Dorcas was busy making a large number of garments, you would at once infer that she did not need them for herself, but intended to give them away! Now, since there is a provision made of all these good and precious things of which I have spoken, it is to be concluded that they were made to be given to those who need them! Surely, when I pray, "Give it to me," He will give it to me, for He has provided it in order to give it! He has made a fountain and water in the fountain. What is it for? The light that is in the sun is not there for the sun's sake, but for somebody's use. And so the treasures hid in Christ must be there for those who need them! They must be there for you and me! There is provision made for as many as will receive it.

Then *it is for God's Glory to give me what I ask*. If I am a sinner, it is God's Glory to forgive my sins—

"This is His great prerogative."

If He gives us great faith, He will get the Glory of it. It is God's Glory to make us live near to Christ. "Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit." Do you not think that He will give you these great blessings? His actions, ever since He first revealed Himself to man have always been for His own Glory, and surely you have a mighty argument to encourage your confidence in this fact that to bless you with this wondrous blessing will be to His Glory!

Then, again, *He has promised to do this*, and that is the best of all encouragements. “Whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.” “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” “The desire of the righteous shall be granted.” Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.”

And as for you, Sinner, *He has told you to come to Him*. I spoke of rest just now as being enjoyed by those who find Him. He says, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” Whatever it is that your soul desires, is there not a promise for it? And if there is, there is a faithful God at the back of every promise who will make that promise good!

But we have even more than that. *We have a living Savior to plead the promise on our behalf*. “Therefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” We have the promise of God and then we have the plea of Christ to make that promise effective! I remind you Believers who are asking for more Grace—and you sinners who are asking for pardon—that God has made a great supply and that supply must be intended to be used! It is to God’s Glory that it should be used. He gives a promise that He will hear your prayer. Jesus Christ stands up to plead that promise! “Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find Grace to help in time of need.” “There is none like that, give it to me.” Give it to me now! Give it to me now, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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RECRUITS FOR THE KING

NO. 3533

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1916.

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

“David, therefore, departed from there, and escaped to the Cave Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father’s house heard it, they went down there to him. And everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him, and he became captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.”
1 Samuel 22:1-2.

DAVID in the caverns of Adullam is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ despised and rejected among the sons of men. Christ is the Lord’s Anointed, but men perceive not the anointing. He is persecuted by His great enemy, the world, as David was persecuted by Saul, and he now rather dwells in the Cave of Adullam than sits upon his throne. Just as when David was in his dishonor, it was the time for his true friends to rally around him. And so at this hour, when the name of Christ is associated with much of dishonor and rebuke, now is the time for the true followers of the Savior to rally around His banner and to espouse His cause. To come to David after he had been crowned king was poor work—the sons of Belial could do that—but to ally themselves to David when he was obliged to hide himself in mountain caves from his cruel enemies, this proved men to be David’s true friends and loyal subjects. Blessed are they to whom it shall be given to enlist under the banner of Christ at this present time, who shall not be ashamed to confess Him before the sons of men, or to boldly take up His Cross and to suffer such loss and persecution as it may please His Providence to ordain for them to bear. As it is not concerning David, but concerning David’s greater Son, I propose to address you this evening, let me say a few words at the outset to—

I. THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY ENLISTED IN HIS BLESSED BAND.

Foremost among those of David’s troop were his *brothers and all his father’s house*. So, too, Beloved in Christ, we who have been called by Divine Grace are regarded by Him as His brethren and all His Father’s house. Looking round upon His disciples when He was here below, our blessed Master said, “Behold My mother and My brethren! For whoever

shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother.” Such His condescension that He is not ashamed to call us brethren. As many of us as have given our hearts to Him, rely upon Him and love Him, are really and truly His brethren and of His Father’s house. His Father is our Father, His joy is our joy, and His Heaven shall be our Heaven before long! Now, what shall I say to you, my Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ, but this—Let us take care that we boldly avow our kinship with David, our Lord! Let us never blush to defend the cause of Christ. There are different ways of playing the coward—let us seek to avoid them all. The minister who is bold enough when he preaches before the multitude may feel his lips quiver when he has to speak face to face with one individual. O God, save Your servants from this form of cowardice! Or some of you may be able to speak to one or two persons, but if, perchance, you are thrown into a little promiscuous company, where you ought to avow your allegiance to your Lord, you hold your tongue and lose the opportunity for lack of courage. God deliver His servants from this form of cowardice, also! In all companies, on all occasions and under all circumstances, be faithful to your Master—deny Him not, but openly avow Him before the sons of men! How He deserves to be acknowledged by us since He has taken knowledge of us and recognized us when we were infinitely beneath His notice! Oh, ten thousand blushes should cover our faces, to think that we could ever at any time think it hard to acknowledge that He is our Lord and Master! Pray for courage, my Brothers and Sisters—I am sure it is needed! It seems to come to Christians naturally in persecuting times, but in these soft, silken days of piping peace you mingle in society, so called, with such deference to fashion, and you go in and out of your drawing rooms with such dainty conceits, you converse so complacently with your friends, you are such well-bred ladies and gentlemen in your own estimation, that you often forget that you are Christians—in honor bound to keep the faith and bear the testimony to Christ! It is, perhaps, easier for the poor to be bold in confessing the Redeemer’s name than it is for those in more affluent circumstances. Alas, alas, if good fortune imperils your faithfulness! This is wicked, indeed! It is a sorry rebuke to utter from a Christian pulpit! It ought to be the very reverse. Your pecuniary independence ought not to enslave you. God deliver you who love Christ from anything like shamefacedness in connection with the Kingdom of your exalted Head!

Let me urge you, also, as you boldly confess Him, *to leave the world in order to join Him*. His brethren and His father’s house, we are told, concerning David, left Saul’s territory and went away to Adullam to be with the hunted ones. Let us do the same! Ah, there is too much worldly conformity about everyone among us! I will not attempt to point any finger at any of my Brothers and Sisters, or expose their faults, but a man must be blind not to perceive that many Christians do their utmost to be as

worldly as they can be consistently with their idea of getting to Heaven at last. Are there not many who in their dress, in the fitting up of their houses, in the conduct of their business, conform so closely to the times and the fashions, that if they were not known to be Christians by some other evidences, they would not be classed by any observers with those who are on the Lord's side? I do not think it possible for us to be too thoroughly nonconformist in respect to the maxims, the usages and vanities of this present evil world! What does this text mean? "Come you out from among them." Is not that enough? No! "Be you separate." Is not that enough? No! "Touch not the unclean thing." So thorough is to be the separation that there must be a coming out, a snapping of every link that maintains a connection with evil and the renewal of that communion by even so much as a touch is to be avoided by us! Take David's part, you that love David. Renounce everything for David! Oh, you Christian men and women, if you love Jesus, you must know He is worth ten thousand worlds! He is to be esteemed before all the pomp and gaiety of this poor world, were its charms and allurements multiplied a million times! He is infinitely to be preferred rather than to court the smiles of the great, or to enjoy the love of your friends, or to be flattered by the good opinions of your relatives! Therefore, I pray you, leave all to follow Him and forsake all other to cleave to Him, and Him alone!

But am I not speaking to many who have confessed Him, who are confessing Him, and who do, more or less every day of their lives, practice a self-denying nonconformity to the world? Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I long that our sense of duty should kindle to an ardent enthusiasm! Can we not do something heroic, or dare something perilous, in token of our loyalty to Christ? Oftentimes my heart grows big with a strong desire that I might see a Church in this place, pre-eminent for consecration to the Captain of our Salvation! I prayed for this just now—nor was it for the first time I offered that prayer. If we did but give of our ample property, or of our scanty pittance, at the rate which all of us *should* give—or if we did but work for Christ at the rate which He deserves of us, or anything at all like it—if we did but live for Jesus in any measure as gratitude might prompt, what a front we would present—what a power we would exert!

As a great Church, how we might tell upon this great city! What a mark we might leave upon our age! But why am I talking about the whole community? I have not yet attained unto this pure devotion myself! Still, God knows I am wishing to press onward. I aim to forget that which is behind, while reaching forward and pressing onward. Beloved, you remember the story of those three strong men who, when David sighed for a drink from the well of Bethlehem, risked their lives to procure it for him? Are there no strong men here—men of faith, men of valor—who will dare exploits for my Master? He cries out for the conversion of souls—will

none of you consecrate yourselves to that work? Will none of you break through the conventionalities of society in quest of seekers? He says, "Give Me a drink," just as He said to the woman at Samaria's well—and His thirst is satisfied when He sees His Father's will accomplished! Are there not men here strong, brave, and chivalrous, who can preach Christ where He has never been preached before? There were others among David's followers who did exploits like these—one of them slew a lion in a pit, in winter time, while of another we are told that he slew the Philistines, and the Lord worked a great victory! And can we not do something that shall exceed and excel the ordinary service of modern Christianity? I blush for modern Christianity! Its gold has become dim. Its most fine gold is changed. Its glory has departed. The early Christians were full of an enthusiasm which could not have tolerated the languid indifference of these times! They were so devoted, so intense, so passionate, so full of Divine furor for the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom that they made their influence felt wherever they dwelt, or even sojourned for a short season! God send us some of this sacred zeal now! We need more of the enthusiasm which burned in the hearts of Wesley and of Whitfield! Where shall we look for the glowing ardor and the untiring labors of the Apostle Paul? Where are the disciples that emulate the zeal of the blessed Master, whose meat and whose drink it was to do the will of Him who sent him? May this be given to us all! God send it to us—send it to us, now, send it to us here, send it to me, send it to you, my Brothers and Sisters—and send it to you henceforth throughout your lives!

I do not think I need say more, unless it is to entreat you to *keep up your courage* when you know that you are engaged in the cause of Christ. There is a great struggle going on around us. This entire nation is from time to time convulsed with serious questions in which the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ is greatly concerned. Let all those who love Him stand forth with unflinching integrity! *Expediency* is the mean word that describes the lax morals of the age, but *righteousness* is the undeviating, the eternal principle by which the universe is governed! The Kingdom of Christ is not of this world. Be it ours to help the oppressed, to succor the weak and to give liberty of conscience to all men. May God defend the right! Defend the right He will! If our names are cast out as evil. If we are misunderstood and misinterpreted, belied and slandered, let it be so—we are neither surprised nor dismayed! The right has always to be maintained in the teeth of slander and abuse. But, in God's name, let us not be cowards! Let us always do our duty manfully and lawfully. Let us cheerfully hold fast our profession. Let us adhere with confidence and steadfastness to the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Star of David is in the ascendant—the house of Saul is growing weaker and weaker. Having thus addressed the soldiers, I am now coming for a few minutes to—

II. ACT AS A RECRUITING SERGEANT.

Besides his own relatives, there were others who joined with David. Now, why did they join him? For much the same reason, I may answer, that has influenced many of us. It was because they had need of him. They ought to have gone to David because his character was so good and his conduct so upright. They ought to have helped him because his disposition was so kind and sympathizing. They might well have rallied to his standard because he was the Lord's Anointed. They might, as wise men, have cast in their lot with him because there was prophecy and promise of his triumph and his reign over the nation. But they were really swayed by other motives. They went to him for three reasons—because they were distressed, because they were in debt and because they were discontented. Through dire dismay they sought shelter and succor.

Now perhaps it were well should I tell you of the sweet Character of the Lord Jesus, but if I did, you would not come to Him. It were well did I tell you of the prowess of my Master, and how He conquered Goliath and slew the foemen who tyrannized over us. It might be well were I to tell you that He is God's appointed Savior, that He is destined to reign as King, and that they who confess Him, now, shall be exalted with Him when He comes in His Kingdom. Attractive as all this might be to some minds, the master attraction always is that He becomes suitable to you in your present necessities—in those dilemmas which just now press heavily on your souls. So I propose to address the three sorts of people who are most likely to come to Jesus, hoping that they will seize this propitious hour and enlist under His banner at once, without hesitation or delay!

The first sort who came to David were *distressed*. They were “hard up,” as we say. They had spent their substance. They were bankrupts—their means and their hopes alike exhausted—therefore they went to David. They seemed to say, “Our case is so bad that it cannot be worse—it may be better if we go to David.” Their case was like yours, so well described in our hymn—

**“I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try—
For if I stay away,
I know I must forever die.”**

I know there are some distressed ones here! I have come to enlist them in my Master's ragged regiment! 'Tis thus despair will vanish and thus will hope revive, for being enlisted under Him, their courage may rally while they fight His battles and receive His blessing!

You are distressed *because you feel you have no merit of your own*. That feeling is very right, for you have none! You never had and you never will have any! At one time you thought you were as good as other people, or perhaps you even thought you were better. That vain thought

has now gone. Your good works, your merits, your best endeavors, your choicest prayers all dissolve—nor dare you glory in any one of them! Come, then, to Christ! He has merits for those who have none. His cause is good, though yours is bad. You are the very sort of people whom He came to rescue, for whom He died! He came, not to call the righteous, but *sinner*s to repentance! Inasmuch as you are evidently sinners, come! Come to the sinner's Savior! Put your trust in Him and live! Others are distressed because they feel they have not any power. You cannot believe, you say. You cannot repent. In fact, you cannot do anything as you would! The more you try, the more powerless you find yourselves to be. You would pray, but you cannot! You feel so dead, so cold. If you attempt to move, it seems all to end in disappointment. Well, my dear Hearers, Jesus Christ died for them who have no strength, for thus is it written, "In due time, when we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly." Oh, you that have no power, take heart, because Christ is the Power of God! There is ability enough in Him to make up for all your impotency! Come and cast yourselves with all your weakness upon His irresistible might, and you shall have a full supply of all that your souls need!

But I know there are some here who are distressed, because, in addition to their having no merit and no power, they *have no sensibility*. "I do not feel my need as I ought," says one. "I have not such a sense of my sin and danger as I would like," says another. Oh, Beloved, Jesus Christ came to raise the dead! He came to give sensibility to those who are callous and careless, to turn hearts of stone into flesh! I believe those persons who think they do not feel their need are those who do really feel their need the most. There is no sense of need so great as when a man feels that he does not feel and thinks that he does not apprehend the depth of his own need, for then he is evidently alive to his true condition! You may possibly have more of the work of the Holy Spirit in you than some others whose sense of need appears more lively, though it proves less lasting. That deep, awful solicitude which makes you fear because you do not feel, and makes you groan because you cannot grieve, is not to be despised, for it is an experience often associated with gracious operations of the Spirit of God! Whether it is so or not in your case, give no place to despondency, but believe that Christ can save you, for He is able and willing to do so! If you cannot come with a broken heart, come *for* a broken heart. If you cannot come to Him repenting, come to Him to *get repentance*, for He is exalted on high to give repentance as well as remission of sins. He does not require any preparation in you. All the preparation He requires, He prepares Himself, and that is the work of His Spirit in your souls! Come, then, you who are distressed and distrustful, you who have not any good thing to recommend you as creatures, nor any good desire to extenuate you as sinners—you who are so consciously bad

that there could not be found a good apology for you, even in your own estimation, if you were racked over and over again! Come to Jesus, lost, ruined, undone, poverty-stricken, as you are! Come and trust my Master, the Son of David! The way to be enlisted, you know, into Her Majesty's service, is to take the shilling. The way to enlist in Christ's service is simply to trust Him! You need not bring anything nor take anything, but simply trust in Him and you shall become a soldier of the Cross!

The next persons mentioned in the text in coming to David were *those who were in debt*. I would gladly ask those in debt to come to Jesus. The man thus in debt says, "I have got to pay my life. I have sinned and God has said that the sinner shall die. Yet I cannot afford to forfeit my life. How can I dare to die? I have no hope, no trust, no confidence with which to pass the iron gates of death! And then, after death, there is the terror of judgment for my soul since I have broken God's Law—and the Law condemns me and demands my banishment from His Presence, and my final destruction. What shall I do? I cannot pay the debt, the thought of being put into prison forever is terrible to me. How, how! Oh, tell me, how can I escape?" Ah, well, I should be glad, indeed, if there were some here who should thus admit their debts and their inability to pay them. Happy preacher to have to address such an awakened audience! Happy hearers to be dismayed with such hopeful anxieties! Blessed, indeed, were our work if we always had those before us who knew the debt of sin, who felt its grievous demerit and feared its glaring doom! Take counsel, then—whatever debt you owe, whether it is great or small—come and trust in Jesus and you shall be relieved of the responsibility! Come and rely on Him who suffered in the sinner's place and was punished for the ungodly—bearing their iniquities in His own body on the Cross! A look at Him, one look of faith, will disclose to you the transfer of every debt and every sin from you to Him! You shall see how He casts them into the Red Sea of His atoning blood, where, though they may be sought for, they shall never more be found. I would gladly enlist you, poor debtor, and take you out of the Debtor's Prison, and introduce you to my Master's table! Bankrupt debtors make good soldiers for the King! Come, then, without more ado, and be enlisted in the King's army!

Another class that came to David was *those who were discontented*. Such there are, nor have we far to go to seek them out. Yonder is one, to whom I would now speak. But a little while ago you were a happy young fellow. You could go into all kinds of revelry and little reckon the sin, so fully did you enjoy them all! You cannot do so now. You do not understand the reason why, but the keen edge of your appetite seems to have been blunted—your taste for dissipation is gone. Those companions who were once such rare jolly fellows have ceased to cheer you with their talk. You do not enjoy their gabble now, it seems so flat, and stale, and foolish! You cannot laugh at their lewd jests, or quaff their sparkling cup as

once you used to do. You have been behind the scenes of this poor world and you have pitied the pale cheeks that are painted with the hue of blooming youth—you have heard the heavy sighs of those that raise the merry laugh—and you have witnessed so much wanton disguise that it has filled you with woeful disgust! You have seen enough to know how it will all end. No marvel that you are discontented! You are the man for me! Yours is the ear I want to catch! Yours the heart I love to reach! A blessed case it is when a man gets discontented with this vain world, for then, perhaps, he may seek after another world, a brighter, better sphere! When he is out at elbows with himself and all his foolish companions, then, perhaps, he will make acquaintance with the exiled, but anointed Man of Bethlehem, and find in Him a Friend, a Counselor who will be his Helper, speaking kindly, advising wisely and leading on triumphantly till He calls you to participate in the Kingdom of His Glory! You are discontented with yourselves. Your own reflections bitterly reprove you. When you sit down and think a little—a habit into which, perhaps, you have but lately fallen—you discover that things are out of the square. You cannot feel satisfied. Strange strivings and manifold misgivings perplex you and you get no peace. For my part, I am thankful, a thousand times thankful, that you have come to be so ill at ease when there was so much cause for disquiet! Now there is some hope that you will trust your future and your fate to the Son of David! Close in with the offers of His Grace and be saved by Him!

I recollect an old sailor who, after having been for nearly 60 years a drunkard and a swearer, and everything that was bad, heard a Gospel sermon that touched his heart. And when he came forward to make a profession of his faith in Christ, he said, “I have been sailing 60 years under a very bad owner, and under a very bad flag, but now I have taken on board a new cargo and am running for a very different port, and under quite a different flag.” So I trust it will be with some of you, soon, that you will change your cargo, change your flag and change everything! After preaching in the Wesleyan chapel at Boulogne one day some time ago, a person recognized me and was telling me how he had found Christ through reading the sermons. About that time an old salt came up to me and said, “Do you know me? My name was Satan once, I remember you well. Now Satan came here one Sunday morning and he richly deserved his name, for he was as much like Satan as a man could be! He sat there, and after the sermon the Lord touched old Satan, and gave him another name besides.” The man came to Christ because he was discontented with himself, and so he gave himself up to Jesus, and was saved by Him. Is there any old salt here who will do that now? May there not be some sailor, some soldier, some stranger somewhere here, who shall say this night, “I will approach the King and ask Him to accept me, even me”? If He does not accept you, please let us know, for we have never yet

met with a case in which Jesus refused a poor sinner that came to Him! He has said, "He that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Should He cast you out, it will be a new thing under Heaven! But He cannot do it! If you are black as sin can stain you, yet if you come to Him, you shall be taken into the Savior's bosom, washed in the fountain filled with His blood, started on a new career and helped to serve Him all your days! But I must come to a finish. I have addressed myself to the Lord's people. I have beaten up for recruits for King Jesus, and now I want to—

III. TELL THE RECRUITS A LITTLE ABOUT THE SERVICE, and then I have done. Remember the last words of the text, "And David became a captain over them." Whoever, then, comes to Christ must submit to Christ's rules. What are they? One of the first is that *you should be nothing at all and that King Jesus should be everything*. Will you submit to that—that you shall have no honor, that you shall take to yourselves no credit, that you shall never lean on your own strength or wisdom—but you shall take Him to be made of God unto you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption? I hope you will not kick at that.

Another of our Lord's rules in His kingdom is that, *if you love Him, you must keep His commandments*. After trusting Him, you are to become obedient unto Him. One commandment is that you are to be baptized. Do not stumble at that! I think if there is anything plain in Scripture—I will only speak for myself, I cannot speak for anybody else—it is that every Believer is to be immersed in water as a confession of his faith. I think I could as soon doubt that the Deity of Christ is declared as doubt that the Baptism of Believers is enjoined, for the one thing appears to me to be as plainly revealed in Scripture as the other! I pray you, Brother, Sister, be not disobedient to the Lord's commands, but remember the Gospel which we preach, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Keep to the two points and claim the promise! Then there is the Lord's Table, of which, if you join yourselves to Christ, you have a right to partake. Do not forget it. It will sweetly remind you of all that your Savior has done and suffered for you. It is nothing more than a remembrancer, but take care that you do not neglect so blessed a memorial! All the precepts and statutes of our Lord Jesus Christ are to be cordially obeyed. Albeit, Christ opens a hospital for all sick folk—He does not mean you to be always cripple, but His purpose is to heal you—and after that to teach you how to walk. He builds up His kingdom as Romulus built up Rome. He receives all the vagrants of the neighborhood, but then He makes new men of them! Even so those that are gathered from the outcasts are to be made faithful in Christ Jesus. Drunkard, you must have done with your cups! Swearer, you must have your mouth washed out—no more of those foul oaths must you utter! You who have given yourselves up to carnal pleasures must be purged from all your defilements! You who have been gay and frivolous must renounce those vanities and seek after weighty, so-

lemn, eternal interests. You who have had hard hearts, before, you must ask the Master to make them soft—and whatever He says to you, you must do.

Now, my young recruit, what do you say to this? You who would bear the name of Christ and get to Heaven, are you willing to come to Him and give yourselves up to Him, henceforth forsaking all your sins? He that gives not up his sins makes a great mistake if he thinks to escape the wrath of God, or hopes to find Grace in His eyes! Oh, will you not give up your sins? They are vipers! They will only poison your souls! They will destroy you! Oh, give them up! Give them up, for what shall it profit you to keep them, and to lose your soul? Come to Jesus first. Trust His merit. Rely upon His precious blood and then, by His help, renounce every evil way and seek to obey Him who has redeemed you by His blood! So shall the blessing of the Lord rest upon you forever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 68.**

“A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.”

Exiled, ill at ease, hunted, exposed to danger. Yet he could sing. And some of the sweetest Psalms come out of the bitterest afflictions. God’s songsters are like nightingales that reserve their sweetest music for the night. Whenever you and I come to be in the wilderness, may we refresh ourselves with such a Psalm as this!

Verse 1. *O God, You are my God.* Everything else has gone, but You are my God! There are gods of the heathen, but You, the true and real Jehovah, are my God! Oh, what a blessed thing it is to take a firm grip of God after this fashion, “O God, You are my God,”

2. *Early will I seek You.* “Oh,” says one, “why did he seek God if God was his?” Would you have him seek another man’s God, then? No. It is because He is ours that we seek Him and desire His company. If you know God to be your God, you will not be satisfied unless you are living near Him. “Early will I seek You.” I will not wait. I cannot wait. I cannot tarry. I *must* not tarry. Early will I seek You.

2. *My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water.* Thirst is one of the strongest longings of our nature. Hunger you can appease for a while, but thirst is awful. There is no staying that. When it is once upon a man, he must have water, or die. “My soul thirsts for You. My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.” No means of Grace. Nothing to help me. No Believers round about me—left alone, thirsting for my God. And yet it is so precious a thing, so sure a mark of Grace to thirst for God anywhere, that one may be thankful even to be in a dry and thirsty land if one possesses a true thirst after God!

2. *To see Your power and Your glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary.* He had seen God in His Holy Place, and he longs to see Him again. They who never knew God do not want to know Him. But they who have known Him desire to know Him more and more! If you do not long for the Bread of Heaven, it is because you never tasted it. He who has once tasted it will sigh and hunger till he is satisfied with it!

3. *Because Your loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You.* “Better than life,” and surely life is better than anything else! “Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life.” Life is better than food. Life is better than riches. And if the loving kindness of God is better than life, then we have a very high price set upon it, but not too high a price! Oh, that you and I may know how sweet, how precious is the loving kindness of God! And then we shall say that it is better than life! And because it is so, my lips shall praise You. Not only my heart, but I will do it openly. I used to speak vanity when I served vanity. Shall I not now speak out for God when I have come to serve Him? My lips shall praise You.

4. *Thus will I bless You while I live: I will lift up my hands in Your name.* I will confess You. I will rejoice in You. I will work for You. I will encourage myself in You. I will lift up my hands in Your name. Are any of you cast down? Do your hands hang down? Then lift them up in God’s name! Nothing else can make you strong. The name of the Lord shall be your strength!

5, 6. *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness: and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips, when I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches.* God’s people know what perfect satisfaction means. When God reveals His love to them and Christ draws near in the fullness of His Grace, then they would not change places with all the kings of the earth! Not all the richest dainties that were ever served up at royal banquets are equal to the love of God! My soul, not my body, but my inmost self, my very life, shall be satisfied, even as with marrow and with fatness. The Oriental’s idea of luxury is to eat fat. How they will eat what we cannot endure! But we, dear Friends, understand the metaphor and appreciate what is meant by David. God will satisfy us with the best of the best, with marrow and fatness. He will make that satisfaction double as with marrow and fatness! And we shall be so satisfied that we shall have nothing left to do but to praise. “My mouth shall praise.” Says our poet—

***“All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to their King!”***

He that wrote that verse knew what was meant by this, “My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.”

7. *Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.* That is God’s logic. One likes to see “therefores” in Scripture. They are inferences drawn with great accuracy. You have been my Helper. Well, then, You will be my Helper! And if I cannot see Your face, I will rejoice in the shadow of Your wings. I know that You are there, even if I cannot see You. And if I only know that You are there by the shade that You cast over me—that calming, cooling shade which dampens the ardor of my worldly spirit—if this is all that I get from You, yet in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice!

8. *My soul follows hard after You.* I am after You, my God, hard after You, following hard after You, longing for You like a dog at the heels of his master’s horse, going with all his might, following hard after You! Oh, this is a healthy condition to be in! If you cannot yet reach your God, yet if you follow hard after Him, it is well with you, for notice the next sentence.

8. *Your right hand upholds me.* No man follows after God unless God helps him to do so. It comes of the Grace of God. When you are seeking God, it is because God is seeking you! And though you know it not, there is a vast amount of Grace couched in a desire.

9, 10. *But those who seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes.* Or jackals, as his name did become.

11. *But the king shall rejoice in God; everyone that swears by Him shall glory; but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.* Very hard work to stop them, though, for they are always breaking out in fresh places. They have always some new falsehood. A shovelful of earth will do it, if nothing else will. Let everyone listen who is accustomed to slander, or to speak evil of his neighbor—listen to this prophetic voice—“The mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.” But the mouths that speak the praises of God shall go on singing forever and ever! May such mouths be ours.

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

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

PREVENTING GRACE

NO. 2924

A SERMON
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***“And David said to Abigail, Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, and blessed is your advice, and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed, and from avenging myself with my own hand.”
1 Samuel 25:32, 33.***

I MUST tell you the story, for if you do not realize the circumstances, you will not understand these words. David was in the position of an outlaw in his county. He knew that he was one day to be king over Israel, but he had such reverence for Saul, the Lord's' anointed, that he would do nothing that would look like usurpation, or seem in any way to injure the reigning monarch. Some 400 restless spirits who had been impoverished by the tyrannical government of Saul, persons who were in debt and generally discontented, came to him in the caves of Adullam and there formed an army of freebooters of which David was the head. A little while afterwards, 200 others, men like-minded, came and united themselves with this force so that David found himself at the head of an army of 600 men of war, all of them valiant men, ready for exploits. You will see he was in a very difficult position—he must find work for these men. They were soldiers of fortune and they must be employed, yet it was impossible for him to act like a traitor—he would not lead his men against his king. He would not begin a revolution in order to provide for his followers.

What, then, must he do if he desired to still be loyal to the king and, at the same time, not to disband his men? He occupied his forces in peacefully guarding the herds of the great sheep-masters who fed their flocks on the high steeps of Carmel. This is not a thing uncommon in the East even today. Certain sheikhs, with their body of followers, sometimes undertake to keep off the Bedouin Arabs and other marauders who attack the flocks of the sheep-master and, of course, they expect to have some kind of remuneration for their trouble.

Now, all through the time that the sheep were in the pasture, David and his men watched over the flocks of a certain sheep-master called Nabal. When the time came round for shearing the flocks, David sent some of his followers to Nabal, to the feast of sheep shearing, presenting his request that some contribution might be sent for the support of his men on account of their having taken care of Nabal's flocks which otherwise would certainly have been diminished by systematic plunder. But Nabal had got all the good he wanted from David and he refrained

not from answering David's messenger in a most rude, surly manner. "There are many servants," he said, "now-a-days, that break away, every man, from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not where they are?"

Such a churlish message could not fail to nettle David. Indeed, we know that it stung him to the quick. He had not run away from his master, but his master had driven him away and, as one who was apart from Saul, but yet was not Saul's antagonist, he was doing the best he could to maintain the peace. His blood boiled over. "Have I guarded the flocks of this miserable wretch," he said, "all this time, and kept my men there merely to attend his sheep, when they might have been profitable at some other work? And now, when I send to him, instead of giving me a donation, he answers me in this churlish manner!" Then, turning to his men, he said, "Gird you on, every man, his sword, we will show this fellow how to treat us." So, leaving 200 men to guard the caves, 400 marched out, David at the head, his hot blood all ablaze within him, his anger showing in his face. "God do so to me," he said, "and more, also, if I leave so much as a dog of that man's house alive by the morning light!" He sallied forth doubtless with the full intent to destroy Nabal, to make his house a heap of ruins and then to devastate the sheep-master's estate! What a false position for a child of God! But David was naturally impulsive and somehow men that have any life in them do sometimes get their tempers aroused. We hear of some people that are as quiet and as peaceful and as easy as a pond of stagnant water—certainly their peace does not flow like a river, and their righteousness is never lashed to fury like the waves of the sea. David was not one of these.

As the son of Jesse rashly pursues the man of Mount Carmel, he meets a woman, Nabal's wife. Perhaps a hard thought comes over him to smite her, but no—she is a woman—David cannot strike her! And, what is more, she is at his feet, asking him to lay all the blame at her door. Then she goes on to tell him that her husband is a very foolish and churlish man and she hopes David will not take offense at his words. She has brought him a present and she tells him that when he shall come to be king, it will be a great ease to his mind to think he never fought his own battles, but only the Lord's. She reminds him of the future and so she makes him forget the present. After a while his heart yields to quiet reflections—he acts rather as a saint than as a soldier, putting up his sword into the sheath and leaving the matter with his God. Righteous vengeance was soon asserted, when barbarous revenge was stopped, for ten days afterwards Nabal died. The Lord Himself dealt out retributive justice to the adversary, while the Lord's servant was held back from indiscriminate slaughter.

That is all we shall have occasion to say about the narrative. It suggests our subject, which is "Preventing Grace"—the Grace which God sends to prevent saints and sinners from running into sin. I hope before the service is over many of us, in looking back upon our past lives, will gratefully bless the Lord—bless His Providence and bless the man or the woman whom He has sent to teach us and to keep us back from evil—

that we shall thank Him because we have oftentimes been turned back from doing the wrong thing and by an overruling counsel been led of Him in the paths of righteousness.

Of this preventing Grace we shall speak in two ways. We will deal first of all with the people of God and with them but briefly, though they are the only persons who will ever be able to recognize the value and feel thankfulness for this precious benefit. Then we shall see how Grace often prevents even men who are *not* followers of Jesus.

I. PREVENTING GRACE IS ENJOYED BY ALL THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

Dear Friends, some of us can bless God at this hour that preventing Grace came to us in the shape of a *godly education*. We heard no blasphemies when we lay in the cradle, no curses startled us from our dreams. Many of us saw no drunkenness beneath the roof of our father's house, no vulgar books were put in our way. Many of you were trained from your youth up to know the Scriptures like Timothy—and some of you have even heard something of the voice of God speaking to you as He did to Samuel. Blessed be God for a holy mother! Blessed be God for an affectionate, prayerful father! Blessed be you of the Lord, you that brought us forth for God and blessed is your advice, for you have kept us from many a sin!

Since then, preventing Grace has come in the shape of godly associations. We need, none of us, to be very proud of what we are if we think what we might have been had we been put in other positions! If, instead of being bound apprentice to a good master and afterwards brought into association with religious people in the Sunday school, in the Bible Class and in the congregation, your lot had been thrown where you could pick up your education in the street and take your college degree in the coal-hole or the theater—who can tell but you had been as black a sinner as those whom you now pass by in the street, wondering that they are so vile? Much of a man's character comes from other men. What we are is not all of ourselves. We are deep in debt to others. Indeed, what man is there upon whom there have not been a hundred fingers to mold him and a thousand influences to make his plastic character what it is? I know that the Grace of God is a thing that makes a man right before God, but I know, also, that holy associations (or ever Grace comes into our heart to renew us) prevent us from indulging in sins into which, under other circumstances, we should certainly have plunged!

In extolling preventing Grace, what shall I say, dear Friends, besides this, of the *Providential circumstances* which have kept us from sin? There have been times with some of us in our younger days before we knew Christ, when the temptation was very strong, but the opportunity was not near. And at other times the opportunity has been before our eyes, but there was no temptation. God help the man that has the temptation and the opportunity at the same time! Many and many a man has received the preventing and restraining Grace of God when the devil has been hindered from throwing the two dice at one time. It is of Grace that at one time there has been the fire in the heart, but no fuel, while at another there has been the fuel but the fire did not burn just at that time

so as to make it convenient or desirable for the man to sin. Oh, Friends, the river of our life has been winding and tortuous in its course! Had it wound in another way, it had been very different from what it is and, perhaps, a word—as we say, “an accident,” a chance hit—may have turned the whole of it! Now we can say that our moral reputation is unblemished, whereas otherwise we should have had to lament that we had been immoral, debauched and depraved if it had not been for this preventing Grace of God working through Providential circumstances.

There is a fountain which is the father of two rivers and these two rivers both take their rise in a lake at the top of a hill. Both rivers start from the same place, but when they end their course they are some five hundred miles apart. Behold this drop of water! There it lies. Which way shall it go? Shall it go down that stream and find its way to yonder sea, or down this stream to another destiny? It needs but a motion of a bird’s wing to move that drop either way and it shall go rolling onward into yonder sea, or it shall find another channel and pursue its course far apart. So has it been with us. The Grace of God—preventing Grace had much to do with the Providence which puts us in such-and-such a channel instead of casting us into another that allowed us to come into contact with holy people rather than to emaciate us with the vilest of the vile! This is a hard blow at our self-righteousness. If we had not had our hearts changed and if Providential circumstances had been a little different, we might have been lost before now.

But besides the power of conversion to change life, how much Believers owe to the Grace of God exercised through *trial and suffering!* They would have gone astray, but they were barred down by affliction. They would have leaped the hedges of God’s Law, but they were clogged by some adversity. Some men owe much to the fact that they were never in good health. A blind eye, or a crippled leg, or a maimed arm may have been in the hands of God a great blessing in keeping some of you back from iniquities in which otherwise you might have indulged! We never know what innumerable streams of good flow from that well which we call Marah, but which God often makes to be an Elim to our souls—

***“Determined to save He watched over my path,
When, Satan’s blind slave, I sported with death.”***

I suppose, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that in looking back you can say, “I can see the finger of God in a great many places where I might have ruined myself—there, and there, and there—though I knew Him not, His arms were underneath me. He guided me with His eyes. He led me by His right hand that I might not be utterly destroyed.”

Now, Christian, if you would think of this a little, *you would be very grateful, indeed, to God for this.* I know if you had sinned even more, the blood of Christ could wash your guilt away—and if your iniquities had been still greater, you would not have overreached the power of Divine Love. But think now how good it is for you that you were not allowed—I speak, of course, only to some of you—to go so far! How much sorrow you have been spared! From what evil habits have you been saved! What temptations are now kept away from you which, if God had not kept you back from sin in former days, might otherwise had overwhelmed you!

Perhaps there is a man here who is a Christian and though he knows he is redeemed, he would give his right arm if he could forget his unregenerate days. There are some men who might say, "I would give my eyes if I could forget what they have seen, and lose my ears if I could remember no more what they have heard." Why, there is a snatch of an old song that will come over you when you are in prayer! And when you are trying to get right up to Heaven there is some old black remembrance of the merriment or dissipation of the former days that checks your flight and is as a clog to the eagle and will not let it mount! There is many a man who might have been a leader in God's camp who is afraid to come out and who, if he had come out, would have but little force because of the weakness some old habit has brought upon him. He feels he cannot do what he would for Christ because of the past. If this to not your experience, then thank God for preventing Grace!

I preached this morning to the chief of sinners, I was glad to do it, but whenever I do, I find some who wish they had been greater sinners—not because they love sin, but because they think they would then see a greater change in themselves when the Grace of God lays hold of them. Instead of this, thank God most devoutly you are big enough sinners as you are. There is enough of vileness and corruption. There is enough of base depravity. There is enough of abominable sin in you now! Thank God if you have not been allowed to give vent to the evil within you and run to an excess of riot. I write every day among my mercies that I was taught to run in wisdom's way.

But, once again, dear Friend, if you have not been permitted to run into outrageous folly, *do not think that you are any nearer Christ because of this*. Do not imagine that you are to be saved in any different way from the most outrageous drunk or the most depraved of harlots! There is the same way to Heaven for you who are highly esteemed among men as for the man who lies rotting in a jail for his crime. I tell you, Sirs, you who think you have done no wrong, you must go to Heaven by the blood and righteousness of Christ as much as the convict at the hulks! And when you get to Glory you shall have no more right to boast of your own merits or your own goodness than the thief who went from the cross to Glory, or that woman that was a sinner and loved much because she was much forgiven! "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid." And while it is cause for congratulation that you may not have wandered so far into sin as others, it is also cause for trembling, for verily I say unto you, publicans and harlots often enter the Kingdom of Heaven before Pharisees! Some who were the vilest of the vile have come to Christ—have penitently accepted His righteousness while others robed in their own righteousness have gone down to Hell and perished with a double destruction with the rags of their righteousness about them!

I hope I have in no way whatever said anything which on the one hand detracts from the value of an early religious training and preventing Grace, nor anything on the other hand which detracts from the Grace which saves the very vilest of the vile. I feel that sometimes when we are preaching, we seem to look after the scum and the riffraff and we forget

many others. I would not forget one of you, my dear Hearers, who hear me Sabbath after Sabbath. God is my Witness, if I thought I had missed any one of you I would be too glad to preach a sermon only for that one person, if I might but win his soul. What did I say? Preach a sermon? I would preach 50 sermons! I would preach my whole life but to win one of you and think myself well paid with such a blessed reward for such easy toil. But whether you are great sinners or little sinners outwardly, remember you are all vile in the inner nature—and the same Grace is presented to you all. “Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”

II. The second part of our discourse is to be addressed to those who as yet have not experienced the Grace of God in its constraining and quickening power. They, too, in a very real sense have received the preventing Grace of God, for **THE PREVENTING GRACE OF GOD IS UNIVERSAL.**

Without the preventing Grace of God to restrain man, he would be unbearable, and if it were not for the preventing Grace of God in society, a nation would be an impossibility, and a well-ordered commonwealth would be a thing for which we might long, but should never be able to realize. Men would be little better, we believe, than the beasts of the forest, tearing and devouring one another if the Grace of God did not keep them in check. And this, I think, is proved by the fact that the further you recede from the Light of the Gospel—the further you get from the agencies which preventing Grace is most likely to use—the more cruel and savage men are toward each other. I thank God that this is a land where preventing Grace is felt even by the very worst. I do not believe there is a burglar or a murderer but has been the subject of it, but has had to strive against it and against his own conscience before he could consummate his crime and give himself up to iniquity. You have had preventing Grace keeping you back from sin. Sinner, if *you* cannot thank God for this, *we* can! We bless the Lord that He restrains you and does not permit you to be worse than you are. We pray that this preventing Grace may never be taken from you, or else you shall be like some wild horse that has desired to dash over the precipice, who, when the rein is laid upon his neck, leaps to his doom and destroys himself and as many as are attached to him.

Yet, while it is universal, *this preventing Grace of God is much detested and abhorred by some men.* Some can hardly tolerate the restrictions which Christianity has imposed upon the nation! They are vexed that they have to shut up shop on Sunday and, by a sort of custom, are compelled to go and hear the Word of God. They wish they lived in some place where they could do just as they liked. The wife who wants her husband and family to go up and hear the Gospel is thought harshly of because of it. Some men would even like, if they could, to have a family that was all the devil’s—but somehow or other God will not let them have their way. The godless man gets a godly wife and he is angry. By-and-by it turns out that one of the children receives God’s saving Graces and he cannot bear the thought of it. I have seen men in spiritual things just like madmen of Bedlam. God knew that those men would ruin

themselves if they were let alone, so, first of all, he straitjacketed them with poverty, that they could not do what they would. Then, afterwards, when they began to tear and foam, He put them into a godly family, as maniacs are put into a padded room, so that, dash themselves as they will, they cannot hurt themselves! These men cannot get loose, but they will strain at their bonds and foam and gnash because God has hold of them—and will not let the devil get the full mastery of them as they would like. O Sinner, the day may come when God will say of you, “Let him have his own way.” If He should give you up, then your doom will be sealed forever and your fate more desperate than words can describe! God help you and keep you from yourself, or else you will soon destroy yourself and go post haste to destruction!

But to turn to a more cheerful view of it, *in many persons this preventing Grace leads to something higher*. After preventing Grace has kept you back from sin, in comes *quickenning* Grace and shows you the hatefulness of sin. And after that comes *pardoning* Grace and gives you power to believe in Jesus and, lo, your sins are put away! May God grant that this may be the case with some of you who have got no further yet than preventing Grace. Be grateful for that, thank God with all your heart for it! May it lead you to repentance. May it lead you to put your trust in Jesus and in Him only! Then you will pass from the mere prevention in which Grace is a shackle, to the liberty in which Grace becomes a shield and a sword, the joy and the sun of your life! May the long-suffering of God lead you to repentance!

But once again, to turn to the solemn chord once more, where it does not lead to higher things, *preventing Grace increases the responsibility of the man who receives it*. If a man will go over hedge and ditch to Hell, he shall find it a hard fall when he gets to the edge. If, when we put poison out of the way and remove everything with which a man can destroy himself, yet he will tear open his own veins, he is a suicide, indeed! Who shall pity him? And when God hedges you about, if you break the hedges—when He puts a bit in your mouth, if you stand chomping it until at last you get it from your jaws and turn to your own way—this will not be done without bringing on your head at the Last Great Day thunders of curses from the universe that shall judge you and the full lightning of wraths from the hand of God who shall condemn you!

I fear there are some here who are sinning against the Light of God. You are not without warnings in this land, not without calls and wooing invitations—the time was when you might have gone into many of the churches in London and not have heard the Gospel so that you could understand it, but now in the corners of the streets and in the theatres you may hear it if you will. And God is my Witness when I say there is one place where you can hear it preached with earnestness and I rejoice to know there are thousands of others! Souls, if you perish, it is not for lack of invitations to Christ! If you will not have Christ, it is a willful rejection! If you will be lost, blame not the minister—lay it not at our door—we are clear of your blood! We shake our garments of the dust of your souls! We will not be responsible for you. We warn you, we cry

aloud to you and if you will not hear, but will go and turn to the downward road, on your own heads be your doom forever and ever!

But instead of enlarging on these and other points, I will try, as God shall help me, to give you a little advice, in the hope that some who have come up, perhaps to a cattle show, or the Handel Festival, or the Great Exhibition, may get more than they came for! Who can tell, some of you may have to say in time and eternity, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, and blessed be your advice!"

Now, young man fresh from the country, you have a scheme in your head and you are going to carry it out tomorrow. If my prayer for you is heard you will not do so! You have come up to London to have a merry time of it—I hope you will have a merry time of another sort! Consider your ways. Think! Why will you go willfully and with your eyes open into that sin? It may be the last sin you will ever commit! It may be that you will die in the act. Great God, how prophetic these words may be! Am I pronouncing the doom of some soul here? Such things have happened and it may be that they will happen again. Oh, I pray you, Friend, stay your hand. Shall I fall down upon my knees and pray you to stop, for an impulse is upon me to speak thus—do not, do not, it is for your life! Back with your hand, man, for fear of the viper's tooth! You are playing on the hole of the asp, but his tongue is ready and his fang shall envenom all your veins! By God, by Christ, by Heaven, by Hell, I entreat you, you who have intended some sin, cease from it! May this advice be blessed to you!

Have you not already had enough? What, man? Have you killed yourself and is not that enough? Are you a lost man tonight and is not that enough? Would you bury deep in sin even your last hope? The leprosy is in you now—would you make it stare in men's faces on your very forehead? Oh, stop! Stop! You have gone far enough, the wonder is that you are spared, seeing you have gone so far! What has all your indulgence up to now brought you? Is there real pleasure in sin? What has been your experience up till now? Is it not a rough road, though it promised to be a joyous one? Have you not already had enough to bear as the result of your evil conduct? Why, therefore, continue to spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not? As the voice of one crying in the wilderness would I now seek to prepare the way of the Lord into your heart! Cease from evil, man! Consider your sin and repent of it, for I hope that to you the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

What if, instead of going into sin tonight, you should take my advice and seek the Savior and find Him? If God bless you, you shall be saved, but if you have shut your ears to God's pleading, it shall not be my fault. Man! Man! You are lost and ruined by the Fall, but there is One who is able to save, even to the uttermost, those that come to Him. To come to Christ is to trust Him. I have preached this Gospel for many years and I do not think I ever finished a sermon except in one way—by trying to explain what is meant by this simple trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Young man, you have the idea that you are to do 20 things. You have been trying to get ready for Christ—that is not the Gospel. That is the Law! The Gospel is trust Jesus Christ, trust Jesus Christ! He died upon

the Cross that He might bear the punishment of the sins of all who believe in Him. So to believe in Him is to trust Him. Trust Him and then it is certain that your sins were laid on Christ and that He suffered in your place. Come to Jesus, come to Jesus, Sinner, come now!

What if this should be the time when the Lord shall meet with you? Write it down, you angels, in your golden tablets! Record the birthday of a soul! Take down your harps, you bright ones! Strike the chords with a new and Heaven-born ardor. Cherubim and seraphim, lift up your voices to notes untried as yet while God Himself breaks forth into a song, rejoicing in singing over them that come unto Him through Jesus Christ, His Son. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Believe now, you in this area and you in these galleries. Oh, that you would believe in Jesus now! Thank God if you have not gone to the great lengths some have gone, but remember you cannot be saved except through faith in Jesus! If you have gone to the greatest lengths, thank God you have not yet gone too far, for He can still reach you. He has a long arm and He can find you in the very depths of your iniquity. Trust Him, Sinner, trust Him, now, and there shall be joy in Heaven over sinners that repent more than over 99 just persons that need no repentance! May God add His own blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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

Verses 1-3. *Now, the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before Me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the Presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the Presence of the LORD.* Observe the misconduct of the Prophet Jonah. He had a plain command from the Lord and he knew it to be a command, but he felt that the commission given to him would not be pleasant and honoring to himself and, therefore, he declined to comply with it. We see, from his action, how some who really know God may act as if they knew Him not. Jonah knew that God was everywhere, yet he "rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the Presence of the Lord." What strange inconsistencies there often are even in good men! Here is one who is favored with a Divine commission—one who knows God and fears Him—yet, for all that, he ventures on the fool's errand of endeavoring to escape from the Omnipresent! He "went down to Joppa," which was the port of his country, "and he found a ship going to Tarshish."

Learn from this that Providence alone is not a sufficient guide for our actions. He may have said, "It was very singular that there was a ship there going to Tarshish just when I reached the port. I gather from this that God was not so very disinclined for me to go to Tarshish." Precepts, not Providences, are to guide Believers. And when Christians quote a Providence against a Precept—which is to set God against God—they act

most strangely. There are devil's providences as well as Divine Providences, and there are tempting providences as well as assisting Providences, so learn to judge between the one and the other.

4. *But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.* Learn, hence, that "Omnipotence has servants everywhere." The Lord is never short of sheriff's officers to arrest His fugitives and on that occasion He "sent out a great wind into the sea." "The wind blows where it wishes." That is true, but it is also true that the wind blows where God wishes—and He knew how to send that great wind to the particular ship. No doubt many ships were on the Mediterranean at that time, but possibly unto none of them was the storm sent save unto the one which carried Jonah, son of Amittai! We say, "Every bullet has its billet," and this great wind was sent to pursue the fugitive Prophet.

5. *Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god.* If there is ever a special time for prayer, it is a time of need. Nature seems then to compel men to utter prayer of such a sort as it is, for it is but nature's prayer at the best! "The mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god."

5. *And cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them.* Life is precious and a man will give up everything else in order to save it. Satan spoke the truth when he said, "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has, will he give for his life." From the action of these mariners we may learn that sometimes we may lighten our ship for the safety of our souls. When we have less to carry, we probably shall sail more safely. Losses and crosses may turn out to be our greatest gains. Let the ill-gotten ingots go to the bottom of the sea and lo, the ship rights herself at once!

5. *But Jonah was gone down into the depth of the ship; and he lay and was fast asleep.* The greatest sinner on that ship appeared to be the least concerned about the storm which had come because of him! He did not even seem to know that there was a storm, for he had "gone down into the depth of the ship; and he lay and was fast asleep."

6. *So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What are you doing, O sleeper? Arise, call upon your God. Perhaps your God will think upon us, that we perish not.* It is hard when sinners have to rebuke saints! And when an uncircumcised Gentile can address a Prophet of God in language like this!

7. *And they said everyone to his fellow, Come and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots and the lot fell upon Jonah.* We commend not the action of these men in casting lots, but we admire the Providence by which the lot fell upon Jonah. Solomon says, "The lot is cast into the lap," but he did not say that it was right that lots should be cast into the lap—and he very properly added—"but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."

8. *Then they said unto him, Tell us, we pray you for whose cause this evil is upon us, What is your occupation? And from where have you come? What is your country? And of what people are you?* I do not know whether these men had traded with those who then lived in these islands, but

they had a very English custom of not judging a man before they had heard him speak. It would be well if we all practiced it more—so that before we condemn men, we were willing to hear their side of the story. Considering that there was such a storm raging, the questions put to Jonah were remarkably calm. They were very comprehensive and went to the very root of the matter.

9. *And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew.* That let them know from where he came and what his country was.

9. *And I fear the LORD, the God of Heaven, which has made the sea and the dry land.* That, I suppose, must be regarded as his occupation. And what a blessed occupation it is—to be occupied with the fear of the Lord! So, you see that though Jonah was not properly following his occupation while he was on board that ship, yet he did not hesitate to avow, “I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of Heaven, which has made the sea and the dry land.” The child of God, even when he gets where he ought not to be, if you test him and try him, will stand to his colors. He will confess that he is, after all, a servant of the living God.

10. *Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why have you done this?* Jonah had to go through this catechism, question after question, and this was the hardest of them all. “Why have you done this?” Could you, dear Friend, submit every action of your life to this test? “Why have you done this?” I am afraid that there are some actions, which we have performed for which we could not give a reason, or the reasons for which we would not like to give to our fellow men, much less to our God!

10, 11. *For the men knew that he fled from the Presence of the LORD, because he had told them. Then said they unto him, What shall we do to you, that the sea may be calm to us?* Here is another question! the catechism is not yet finished and this is one of the most difficult questions of all.

11, 12. *For the sea was growing more tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm to you.* Notwithstanding all his faults, Jonah was an eminent type of Christ. We know that from our Lord’s own words, for he was as long in the belly of the whale as Christ was in the heart of the earth. Here he seems to be a type of our Savior! “Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea: so shall the sea be calm to you.”

12, 13. *For I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land.* They showed a deal of good feeling in all their treatment of Jonah. They could not bear to take away a fellow creature’s life, so they pulled and tugged in order to get the ship to land.

13. *But they could not: for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them.* Their safety lay in the sacrifice—not in the labor. They rowed hard to bring the ship to land, but their efforts were of no avail. If they would cast Jonah overboard, then they would be safe.

14, 15. *They then cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech You, O LORD, we beseech You, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not*

upon us innocent blood: for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You. So they took up Jonah. Put the emphasis on the first phrase, “So they took up Jonah”—that is, with great reluctance, with much pity and sorrow, not daring to do such a deed as that wantonly and with a light heart. When men do deeds like this on a far greater scale and go to war with a light heart, they will have a heavy heart before long. If ever you have to cast a brother out of the Church—if ever you have to relinquish the friendship of any man—do it as these men did with Jonah—patiently, and carefully. Investigate the matter and do not act until you are driven to it after consulting the Lord.

15, 16. *And cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.* Jonah had been the means of causing a greater change than he expected! His conduct and punishment had been a warning to those thoughtless sailors. They could not but believe in the God who had thus followed up His fugitive servant.

17. *Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.* He prepared a storm, He prepared a fish and we afterwards read that He prepared a gourd and He prepared a worm. In the great things of life and in the little things, God is always present! The swimming of a great fish in the sea is, surely, not a thing that is subject to law. If ever there is free agency in this world, it must certainly be in the wanderings of such a huge creature that follows its own instincts and plows its way through the great wastes of the wide and open sea! Yes, that is true. Yet there is a Divine predestination concerning all its movements. Over every motion of the fin of every minnow, predestination presides! There is no distinction of little or great in God’s sight—He that wings an angel guides a sparrow! “The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.”

17. *And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.* So round about the truant Prophet was the preventing Grace of Jehovah.

—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.**

CHRISTIANS KEPT FROM SIN NO. 3037

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 25, 1907.

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“And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent you this day to meet me: and blessed be your advice, and blessed be you, which has kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with my own hand.”
1 Samuel 25:32, 33.

THESE verses are taken from the story of David's coming into contact with Nabal the churl. Nabal was a great sheep-master and David and his 600 men had been especially careful not to injure his flocks, but had protected them from any pilfering that might have been practiced by wandering bands of desert rangers. At that time Nabal was shearing his sheep and David, who was in some measure of need, thought it a suitable time to ask something from him, according to Eastern custom, in return for the services which he had rendered to his shepherds. So he sent 10 of his young men to ask Nabal for the *backsheesh*, but, instead thereof, they received an insulting message to take back to their master. Thereupon, David—who seems to have been always of a quick spirit, whether for right or for wrong—who made haste to obey God's commandments, but who made equal haste to obey his own impulses—girded on his sword and bade every man do the same and declared that they would march to the house of this churl, Nabal, fall upon him at once and destroy him and all that appertained to him, root and branch. While he was marching in haste to carry out his stern determination—as God's Infinite Goodness would have it, Abigail, the wise wife of the foolish Nabal, met him and confessed that her husband was a man of Belial. She pleaded that she had not seen the messengers whom David had sent, besought him to accept the provisions she had brought and urged David to leave the avenging of himself to God, so that when he came to be king, it would be no grief of heart to him that he had shed blood needlessly, or had acted as his own avenger. David who had Divine Grace in his spirit, although he was on his way to do wrong, felt the force of Abigail's rebuke, sheathed his sword, thanked her and thanked the Lord, too, that he had thus been preserved from committing a great sin which might have left a great stain upon his character and been a source of trouble to him for the rest of his life.

Learn from this, dear Brothers and Sisters, that the best of men need to be always on the watch, lest, in some sudden temptation, they should be carried off their feet. You may fancy that you have no occasion to fear certain forms of temptation, but you do not know what you may do. The

wall of resolution may be strong in one particular wind, but let the wind only blow from another quarter and the wall may speedily fall. You may think yourself to be strong simply because, as yet, you have not been tested and tried as you will be sooner or later—and then, in a single moment, when you are least prepared for it, you may be overthrown. Remember our Lord's words to His disciples, "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch," for, in such an hour as you think not, temptation may come upon you and woe be unto you if you are not found watching! Therefore, commit yourselves unto the Lord and, "watch and pray that you enter not into temptation."

Here, too, we may observe what a blessed thing it is when, in hours of crisis, the God of all Grace is pleased to interpose to preserve us from committing a certain sin into which we had almost fallen. Our steps had well-near slipped, but, just then the Lord sent some angelic messenger to us, even as Abigail came to David. For that Almighty Love which has manifested itself in restraining Grace, let us render grateful songs of thanksgiving as we look back upon our past lives, for we can scarcely tell how often we should have dishonored our character and our profession if it had not been that God came to our rescue and kept back His servants from presumptuous sins.

The subject upon which I am to talk to you, as the Holy Spirit shall graciously guide me, is the great blessing of being prevented or preserved from sin. I shall speak first upon *the blessing itself*. Then, for a few minutes, upon *the means which God employs to secure it*. And then, thirdly, upon *the great blessedness of which we may be partakers if we endeavor, like Abigail, to prevail with others so as to prevent them from going into sin*.

I. First then, we are to consider THE GREAT BLESSEDNESS OF BEING PREVENTED FROM SIN.

It is an unspeakable blessing to have sin forgiven. We cannot measure the heaped-up blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered. But surely there is a very special favor rendered by God's Grace to those who are kept from the grosser sins into which so many others fall and who are converted early in life after having been hedged about by Divine Grace and not allowed to plunge into the foul kennels of iniquity in which others riot and revel. Those who are thus preserved not only have to sing of *repenting* Grace, as they must do however purely they may have lived, but they can also tell of the *restraining* Grace of God which would not let them wander into the paths of the destroyer as others did!

To be kept from sin is to be kept from many evils for, in the first place, *sin has such a hardening effect upon the conscience*. There is no man who ever sins without having some trace of it left upon his mind and heart. For one thing, it is more easy for him to sin the next time. An impulse has been given and a habit begun which will make it almost inevitable that he shall fall into that particular sin again. He who has served Satan once will be likely to serve him ten times and, on each succeeding occasion, he will serve him more vigorously and readily. He will not need

nearly as much temptation, but will go greedily after evil when the habit of sinning has taken firm hold upon him. But there are some who have been kept from overt acts of evil and so, when they hear the Gospel, they receive it like good ground into which the seed falls and brings forth abundant fruit. But there are others who, because of iniquity, are like the highway trodden hard by the feet of many—and when the good seed falls there, the birds of the air find it an easy task to steal away the grain because it has not penetrated below the surface. Do not imagine that you can live for twenty, thirty, or forty years in sin and yet be just as likely to be converted as anybody else is! I know that God can, if He pleases to do so, call you at the 11th hour as easily as at the first, but, as far as you are concerned, if you harden your neck, you have no right to expect that He will do so, but rather to expect that you shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. So that it is a mercy to be kept from sin in order that this hardening process may not even begin within our mind and heart!

Besides, *he who sins in a little way makes that sin, as it were, a steppingstone to something worse.* David wisely prayed, “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse You me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant, also, from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.” He seemed to feel that he would not go on to the great transgression if he was restrained from presumptuous sins—and he was right in thinking so. You dear young people who through the Lord’s loving kindness and tender mercy, have been brought up among gracious influences, know that you have sinned and that your sin has done your soul such evil as only God’s Grace can remedy—yet you may thank the Lord that you have not been permitted to learn to sing the song of the drunkard, or to live an unchaste life, or to forsake the assembly of God’s people—and so put yourselves out of the reach of the usual means of Grace, as perhaps you would have done by this time if you had not been checked while you were children. A gentle stream, if it is allowed to flow unhindered, becomes at last, a foaming torrent that sweeps away its own banks and causes loss and damage far and wide! Thank God that the current of your life was checked and guided while it was but a stream! May the torrent of sin never overflow your character and career.

There is this blessing about being restrained from sin, namely, that *it saves us from much sorrow in later life.* It should be no grief or offense of heart unto David, said Abigail, to think that he had shed blood causelessly, or had avenged himself. No sinner, when converted, although God has forgiven him, can ever forgive himself—and no child of God, although God has blotted out his sin, can ever blot it out of his own memory as long as he is here on earth. You can see that David was a different man, after his great sin, from what he had been before. He still sang Psalms to God, but there was a hoarseness about his voice which was not there before his great transgression. His Psalms were Psalms of sorrow, whereas before they were glad and joyful Psalms that tripped to lightsome music. I remember once hearing a strange sort of preacher say

that sin did a Believer no harm—a more terrible Doctrine than that could drop from no man’s lips, but then he added—“except that it destroys his peace of mind.” And it seemed to me that such a result as that was harm enough even if there was nothing else. “He that wears the herb called ‘heart’s-ease’ in his bosom,” says Bunyan, “is a happy man even though he sings in rags.” But he whose heart smites him, as David’s heart did, need want no harder blow! May those of you who are unconverted be preserved from gross sin—and may those of us who are saved be preserved from falling by temptation into any evil, lest we have to wring our hands in anguish and go with broken bones to our graves.

Further, he who is kept from sinning has to bless God that *the consequences of his sin upon others are averted*. It is a dreadful thing to know that there will be some in Heaven who were the means of sending others to Hell. I have sometimes wondered what must be the emotions of those who have sinned—especially in the foulest sense—when they are converted, but find themselves quite unable to induce their fellow sinners to even listen to the Gospel. Mr. Whitefield tells us that as soon as he had tasted that the Lord was gracious, he tried to think of all the companions with whom he had been accustomed to play cards, or to indulge in any kind of sinful sport. And he thanked God, he said, that he never gave himself any rest until he had done all that was in his power to bring them to the Savior. You, my Friend, were once an infidel and you are now a Believer—but you cannot recall the words that you spoke in those past days. You may refute, to your own satisfaction, the arguments you then used, but you cannot so readily make others see the force of your refutation. You, my Brother, were known, at one time, to use language which was unclean. You abhor it now and you rebuke it when you hear it from another—but you cannot make others forsake the habit which they learned from you. You cannot get out of your boy’s memory that song which you used to sing in his hearing—you cannot get out of your daughter’s heart that evil word which she heard you utter. It must go on rankling forever in her spirit and doing everlasting mischief unless the Sovereign Grace of God shall intervene to prevent such a calamity. What a blessing it is to begin with God in our youth before we have helped to pull down the walls of Zion, or even cast a stone against them! It is an unspeakable blessing to be saved in old age and to be able to sing of triumphant Grace which has blotted out innumerable iniquities. But it must be—at least on this side of Heaven—a cause of constant regret to such a late penitent that he should have worked so much evil which it is not possible for him to repair.

Besides, dear Brothers and Sisters, it is always a blessing to the Christian—to whom I speak now—to be kept from sin, *for thus his character is preserved* and much of his influence for good will depend upon his character. When backsliders are restored, we cannot help standing in some doubt concerning them—and let them afterwards live as carefully as they may, it will be very difficult for them to ever honor the Church as much as they have dishonored it. If there is but one waterfall in a river—only one in a thousand miles—everybody hears

about it and it is marked on the map. But if another river should flow on smoothly, gladdening the meadows on either side, and bearing navies out to sea, it would not cause such a noise as that one waterfall would make! In like manner a holy life is not talked of, by an ungodly world, one half as much as one unholy act of an inconsistent professor! How they delight to speak of that! How they roll the story of the sins of God's people under their tongues as sweet morsels! You may repent of your backsliding, you may become even more zealous afterwards, as you should do, but my dear Brothers and Sisters, after having once stained your reputation, it is not easy to wipe out the blot. It is infinitely better to be kept true to our first profession until we enter into Heaven, upheld and preserved by the love and Grace of God.

And, only once more upon this part of the subject, you may rest assured that even if sin is forgiven and Divine Grace enters the heart, *never is it better to sin than not to sin*. There is a house on fire. Well, we are grateful if the fire engine comes rattling up almost immediately, if the water supply is abundant and if, by great exertions, every life is saved and much of the property is preserved from destruction. Yet it would have been a greater blessing if there had not been any fire at all. There is serious sickness in the home, but the physician is skillful, the nurse is wise and watchful, the disease takes a favorable turn, the man's life is preserved—he is restored to health and is thankful for his recovery. Yet he would rather not have been sick. There is a wounded soldier. He is carried on an ambulance to the hospital, the surgeons extract the bullet that injured him and bind up his wounds. The man is ultimately restored to the ranks, but he will carry to his grave the scars of the wounds that he has suffered. It would have been a great deal better for him if he had not been wounded at all. So is it with the wounds that sin has made. Let the results of evil be ever so well removed, it can never be better for any of us to fall into sin than to be kept out of it! It if were otherwise, it would look as if sin were not that damning a thing that God's Word tells us it is—it would seem as though it were but a trifle and that there was no need for Calvary's Cross, or of all the wondrous arrangements of Everlasting Wisdom and Love for the saving of men from sin and its awful consequences! Let us cry to God, my Brothers and Sisters, that we may be kept from sin! May this be our prayer night and day, "Lord keep us even from vain thoughts, but, above all, keep us from any acts that would be dishonoring to Your holy name!" We do not want to sin in order that we may know what sin is like. We do not want to plunge into evil for the sake of being washed from it. We do not want to go into this horrible pit and this miry clay for the sake of being drawn out of it. Our earnest desire is that we may be kept from the grosser forms of sin till we are saved by Sovereign Grace and receive the new nature which is the portion of the children of God—and that after that, we may walk in all well-pleasing to the glory of God our Savior!

II. Now, secondly, let me remind you of SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH GOD KEEPS US FROM SINNING.

He does this, of course, in the grandest way *by the work of His Grace within our soul*. There is no protection against sin like the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! If the evil spirit goes out of the heart of man and it is swept and garnished—if the good Spirit does not come and dwell there, seven other spirits, yet more wicked than the first, will return to take possession. There is no way of keeping out the fire of sin except by having the fire of Grace blazing within the spirit. We must fight fire with fire! Let your soul be filled with all the fullness of God and then when the prince of this world comes to you, he shall not be able to overcome you. The Grace of God is the great antidote to sin.

But God also uses other means, even before their conversion, to keep some from the grosser sins and vices in which others indulge. Among these, there is, first, *early education*. There are some who, happily, have never known the sins which others have forever to regret. They have been like plants kept in the greenhouse—they have never been tried by the frosts of this vile world. Be very thankful for this if it is true concerning you, but do not regard it as a substitute for being born-again. Remember that you who are the most amiable, the most excellent, the most zealous, the most honorable must be born-again just as surely as the most abandoned, the most dissolute and the most profane. Regeneration is an absolute necessity before any soul can enter Heaven—and you must not be satisfied with anything short of that! Yet you may be grateful if, like Timothy, from a child you have known the Scriptures, or if, like Samuel, you have been brought up in the house of the Lord from your very early years. Be thankful that you have been kept from much sin into which others have fallen.

Christian association, too, is of the utmost value in helping to keep us from sin. There may be here a young man who has just come to London. After leaving that quiet country town where he was accustomed to attend the services at the little Meeting House, it may be that there is a strong temptation upon him to throw off all the restraints of his past life and to hide himself among the thick trees of this great forest of London and to indulge himself in sin from which he has been hitherto preserved. My dear Friend, if you desire everlasting ruin, this may be your fatal choice! But that you may not even wish to make such a choice, I strongly urge you to endeavor to form associations with Christian young men before you have been laid hold of by the active servants of Satan who are lying in wait for you. Come and join one of our Bible classes, or the Young Men's Christian Association, or find some Christian friends somewhere or other. Form associations and acquaintanceships which, if they do not actually bring you to Christ, may at least keep you from going far astray from the path which your godly parents have always desired you to tread. May the Lord grant that instead of your deciding for Satan, now that you are left to yourself, a sense of responsibility may so press upon you that you may decide, through the Holy Spirit's power, for the Lord Jesus Christ! If, this very night, you, as a newcomer into this great city, should surrender yourself to the Savior, what an eternal blessing it would be to you! The Lord grant that it may be so, and He shall have all

the praise! Still, if you are not at once converted, Christian association will be very helpful in keeping you from outward sin.

And you, my Brothers and Sisters who have Grace in your hearts, will often find that association with warm-hearted Christians is one of the very best ways of keeping you from evil. Some of our Church members have gone to live in the country where they have been only able to worship with a cold and indifferent congregation where the minister has not been more than half awake—and I have observed very serious declension in their spiritual life. When I have met them afterwards, and have ventured to speak to them about it, they have told me that it seemed like going from a hothouse into an ice well—and they confessed that they did not feel as earnest as once they did. O Christians, do prize any association with God's people that is possible! If any of you are in positions where you can enjoy Christian fellowship and you have the opportunity of earning ten times as much money in another position where you must give up that fellowship, do not do it! It is always a loss to Christians to lose the communion of saints. No amount of worldly prosperity can ever make up for the loss they will sustain by leaving an earnest Gospel ministry and an affectionate people. Thank God that He makes use of other Believers to help you in the road to Heaven—and often to restrain you from sin!

The Lord, too, is pleased very frequently *to make use of our position in society* to keep us out of evil. I mean this—some men have always been poor, although they have tried again and again to rise above the level of their poverty. Once or twice they have almost succeeded, yet, not from lack of ambition nor lack of industry, but as though God's Providence were at cross-purposes with them, they have always had to come back to that same sparse diet and tiny cottage! My dear Friends, the Lord knew that you could not bear to be rich. Had He permitted you to possess more than you now have, you might have become proud and worldly. It was better for you to live near to God in poverty than to be a backslider and be rich. I believe that many of the reverses which God's people suffer in trade are preventives from sin—when the Lord sees them beginning to launch out and to speculate—and perhaps to become associated with some rich man who has no Grace in his heart, the Lord says, "My servant is going on very dangerous ground. I must stop him before he is lost." And He soon does it. The man's substance takes to itself wings and flies away—and thus he is rescued from the threatening danger.

Some are preserved from sin by *physical infirmities*. "Well," said one who was lame, "I believe I would never have run in the way of God's commandments if it had not been for my lame leg." "Ah," said another, "and I sometimes think that I would never have seen Christ if I had not been blind." Just because their infirmities incapacitated them for enjoyment of the world, they were made to look for higher enjoyments and to seek that *spiritual* health which is everlasting. Blessed are the lame and the blind who enter into Heaven—and blessed are they who have but one eye, yet who enter there, while some who have two eyes are cast into Hell!

Others, doubtless, have been kept from sin by *severe sicknesses*. These come to us, I believe, not by chance, but by Divine ordination. We say to one another, "I cannot think where I caught that disease." Or, "I cannot imagine why such-and-such a sickness should have come to me." Perhaps you were more out of danger on your bed than you would have been anywhere else just then. Had you been out of that bedroom, you might have been in a position of very serious trial which you could not have been able to endure. I can bear my witness that at least in some of my many sicknesses I have been able to see the reason for them as plainly as I can see that twice two are four. Even when we cannot see the reason, God knows that there is a reason for it and if we cannot see it, it may be all the deeper and may lie all the nearer to the very heart of our Christian life. Your sicknesses, pains, griefs, depression of spirits and all sorts of trials are often sent to you to prevent you from sinning. They tether you, like the horse that was in a meadow with a clog on him, and a friend said to the owner, "I wonder that you clog such a fine horse as that. It seems such a pity." "Well," replied the owner, "I would rather clog him than lose him. And if I did not clog him, I would lose him. He has a habit of jumping hedges and ditches—and we cannot keep him unless we clog him." So, my Brother, my Sister, you have a clog because the Lord would rather clog you than lose you! He would sooner make you suffer here than permit you to suffer forever in Hell.

Once again, God's people have very often been kept from sin by *remarkable Providences*. And some, who are not yet the Lord's people, have been kept from certain forms of sins by very remarkable interpositions of Divine Providence. You probably all remember the story of the Quaker who, one night, felt an irresistible impulse to rise from his bed and ride to a neighboring town. When he got there, he stopped at a house where he saw a light in an upper room. He knocked, and knocked, and knocked again and, at last a man came to the door to ask what he wanted at that time of night. The Quaker replied, "Perhaps, Friend, you can tell me, for the Lord has sent me to you, but I do not know why He has done so." "Come upstairs," said the man, "and I think I can tell you." There he had fixed a rope with which he was about to put an end to his life, but God had sent His servant to him just in time to prevent the contemplated crime. Such striking Providences as that may not happen to all or any of us, for we may not require them. But they do happen to some people to prevent them from sinning against God. It may be also that the Providences which do not appear striking to us, do appear striking to those holy angels who minister to God's people and who bear them up in their hands lest they should dash their feet against a stone—and who constantly adore the wisdom and goodness of God in interposing to keep His servants from going aside into sin. The wheels of Providence, which are full of eyes, have those eyes continually fixed upon us—and those wheels are always revolving on our behalf to God's Glory.

No doubt many have been kept from sin by *a message to their conscience*, either through a minister, or through a tract, or through a text which they read in the Bible, or a kind remark from a friend. There

are members of this Church who, in the Lord's gracious Providence, owe their salvation to a word spoken to them in the street. There is especially one who was tapped on the shoulder just as he was going into a theater, and who was entreated—by one who did not know him personally, but who had mistaken him for somebody else—not to go into such a place as that, but to come with him that Thursday night and listen to the preaching of the Word of God. It was remarkable that such a mistake as that should have been made, but it was a blessed mistake for him and he rejoices this night that he finds himself in God's House, numbered among the Lord's people!

III. This brings me to the last point which is that IT WOULD BE A VERY BLESSED THING IF CHRISTIAN PEOPLE WERE MORE EARNEST TO PREVENT SIN.

This matter was put very plainly under the Old Testament command, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart: you shall in anywise rebuke your neighbor and not suffer sin upon him." Yet, under the Christian dispensation, I am afraid that we are very negligent in our endeavors to prevent sin. Some of us, it may be, think a great deal too much of our dignity. No doubt we are very respectable people, though everybody does not know it and does not treat us with the respect we feel is due to us. Perhaps we suspect others of not being all they ought to be and, therefore, our attitude towards them is not what it used to be. Then they begin to have harsh thoughts concerning us—and in that way Satan has reason to rejoice because Christian people are weaned from each other—and very grievous sin is caused by the roots of bitterness that are thus planted in the soil of the church! Now, my Brother, suppose that somebody did treat you very disrespectfully? Instead of your saying, "I will be avenged on him," suppose that you say to yourself, "If he were to treat me as I really deserve to be treated, God knows that it is very little respect I should receive from him. The man has slandered me this time, but if he knew what my faults really are, he could hit me in a much more tender part"? It is sometimes said that when a boy is wrongfully flogged, "If he does not deserve it now, he probably has deserved it at some other time when he has not had it, or he will deserve it in the future." So, if a rebuke should come to me wrongfully, I will lay it by in case I need it at another time! A Christian sometimes says, "If you tread on a worm, it will turn." Yes, I know it will, but I hope you do not consider a worm an example for a Christian—especially when you have the Lord Jesus Christ to be your Exemplar! If you tread on a worm, it will turn because of the pain you have needlessly caused it. But if you are trodden on by another person—and you are a Christian—you will forgive him and try to do him good. "Do my lord of Canterbury an ill turn," it was once said, "and he will be your friend as long as he lives." Happy are they who kill their enemies by heaping coals of fire upon their heads! Do so, my Brothers and Sisters, whenever it is possible, and do not sin by standing up for that foolish dignity of yours! Be willing to be a doormat, if it is necessary, as well as a doorkeeper in the House of the Lord and, in that way, you

will be all the more honored, for “he that humbles himself shall be exalted.”

It may be that in certain company we may hear talk that is not what it ought to be. And there may be some wit or merriment connected with that talk. But if so, we must not laugh at it, because though we might laugh at the wit, others might suppose that we were enjoying the evil that was mingled with it. It is well for a Christian to put his foot down firmly in such a case as that and to say very emphatically, “As far as your mirth is proper and there is nothing in it that is defiling, I am willing to join with you, for I, also, am a man, and am of a cheerful disposition. But you are going too far, now, and I must enter my protest, for I cannot, by my silence, give my consent to such talk as that.” You ought to do that, my Brothers and Sisters, and you would often find that there would be some who would thank you for doing it. Have you ever heard how Mr. Wesley once stopped a man from swearing? He was riding on the top of a coach and there was an officer in the army there who kept swearing, so Mr. Wesley, at last, very gently said to him, “My dear Sir, I want you to do me a great favor.” “What is that, Sir?” asked the officer. “Why,” he said, “if you should hear me using profane language during this journey, I wish you would kindly tell me of it.” “I see,” said the officer, “what you mean, and I appreciate your kindness.” You might, perhaps, if you did that, receive a stormy reply and make the swearing person worse. Still, you would have done your duty by rebuking the sin gently and affectionately.

How often we might prevent sin if we could come in just when some are on the very verge of doing wrong. Perhaps you say that you have a pastor to do this work, but I have often told you that in such a Church as this, you must all be pastors. With 4,200 members in one Church, what can even two pastors do? What can all the elders and deacons do? The only hope for the Church is that God will watch over you all and that you will all watch over one another. You who are elderly, you who have long been kept faithful, you who have the respect of your fellow members—you, perhaps, know of inconsistencies springing up. If so, do not go and talk about them, especially to those outside the Church. “It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest,” so, instead of talking to others, go and speak to the offending one! You may thus, perhaps, be the means of saving a soul from death and hiding a multitude of sins. May God grant you wisdom, Divine Grace, discernment and affection to deal rightly with such cases! Let it be the resolve of every Christian man and woman to imitate Abigail’s wise way of turning David from his evil purpose! You Christian women, do not be backward in this matter, but use to this end that winning way you have. I expect Abigail pleaded far better with David for Nabal than any man could have done, for she was a woman of understanding and her beaming countenance caught the eyes of the hasty and angry warrior. And he paused awhile to listen to her wise words—and so she won what she set out to gain. I pray that you may all use the powers which God has given you, not to lead others into sin, nor to confirm them in it, but to hold back, as far as you can, all who are about to commit any act of transgression.

May God add His blessing to this message, for the Redeemer's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Colossians 3 and 4:1-4.**

Verses 1, 2. *If you then are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.* This is the best proof that we are really "risen with Christ"—that we set our affection on things above!

3-15. *For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in Glory. Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things' sake the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience: in which you also walked some time, when you lived in them. But now you also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not to another, seeing that you have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is All, and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, heart of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another. If any man has a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do you. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you are called in one body; and be you thankful.* You notice that the Apostle again and again speaks of what we have put off and what we have put on, or of what we are to put off and to put on—"You have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man." "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, heart of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. . . And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." Let the blessed girdle of love bind upon you all these choice adornments of a true Christian's character!

16, 17. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with Grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.* Now the Apostle, guided by the Holy Spirit, gives injunctions concerning various family and domestic relationships.

18. *Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.* It is seemly according to nature. And it is still more "fit in the Lord."

19. *Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.* Never say a bitter word against them and especially never dishonor them in the

household, before children or servants, as some have done, but do all that you can to manifest love and tenderness toward them.

20. *Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.* Nowadays, there are some children who seem to be the head of the family and the parents obey them in all things. This is very foolish and wrong! And when their children grow up and become their plague and curse, they will bitterly lament their folly in putting things out of joint and not keeping the house as God would have it kept, the children in their place, and the father in his.

21. *Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.* Some fathers do. They expect more of children than they will ever get—and more than they ought to expect. And they lay heavy burdens upon them which are grievous to be borne and for little faults there are severe chastisements. This also is wrong.

22-24. *Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: and whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for you serve the Lord Christ.* If you do all your work in that spirit, how noble it becomes and how cheerfully you will get through it! You may have a master who is unworthy of your service, yet, if you “do it heartily, as to the Lord,” you will have rest of heart even in serving those who are froward and perverse—and in due time the Lord will reward your service.

25. *But he that does wrong shall receive for the wrong which he has done: and there is no respect of persons.*

Colossians 4:1. *Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal.* I sometimes think that the good men who chopped the Bible up into chapters—for it is not in chapters in the original—must have hoped that we would not read this message to the masters, as he had put it in another chapter. But I never like to read about the servants without also reading about the masters. There is six for one, and half-a-dozen for the other and, as is usual, in the Scriptures there are balanced duties. If there is an exhortation to the children, there is generally one to the parents close by. And if there is a word to wives, there is one for husbands, too. So let us read that verse, “Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal.”

1-4. *Knowing that you also have a Master in Heaven. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*

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

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

THE DANGER OF DOUBTING NO. 439

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 16, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And David said in his heart, I shall now perish
one day by the hand of Saul.”
1 Samuel 27:1.*

To doubt the loving kindness of God is thought by some to be a very small sin. In fact, some have even exalted the doubts and fears of God's people into fruits and grace and evidences of great advancement in experience. It is humiliating to observe that certain ministers have pampered and petted men in unbelief and distrust of God, being in this matter false to their Master and to the souls of His people.

Far be it from me to smite the feeble of the flock. But their sins I must and will smite, since it is my firm conviction that to doubt the kindness, the faithfulness, and the love of God is a very heinous offense. Unbelief is akin to Atheism. Atheism denies God's existence—unbelief denies His goodness and since goodness is essential to God, these doubts do, in reality, stab at His very Being. That can be no light sin which makes God a liar.

And yet unbelief does, in effect, cast foul and slanderous suspicion upon the veracity of the Holy One of Israel. That can be no small offense which charges the Creator of Heaven and earth with perjury. And yet, if I mistrust His oath, and will not believe His promises sealed with the blood of His own Son, I count the oath of God to be unworthy of my trust. And so I do, in very deed, accuse the King of Heaven as false to His Covenant and oath.

Besides, as I shall have to show this morning, unbelief of God is the fountain of innumerable sins. As the black cloud is the mother of many raindrops, so dark unbelief is the parent of many crimes. And what if I should say that unbelief concentrates the vice of ages into a moment, and gathers up the virus of all the offenses of the race in one transgression? I should not be far from the mark.

But I shall say no strong words in the preface, because methinks the incident in David's history, to which I shall call your attention this morning, will be in itself enough to lead you to give your verdict with mine—that unbelief is a damnable sin, that it should be condemned by every Believer, should be struggled against, should if possible be subdued—and certainly should be the object of our deep repentance and abhorrence.

Now let us listen to David, and may his sin and sorrow be as beacons to warn us from evil! “David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul.” First, I shall remark that *what he said in his heart was false*. Secondly, we shall ask the question, *how he came to think so?* And then we shall notice, in the third place, *what mischief came of such a hard unbelieving thought.*

I. First, THE THOUGHT OF DAVID'S HEART WAS FALSE. He said, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul."

We might conclude it to be false upon the very face of it, *because there certainly was no evidence to prove it.* On no one occasion had the Lord deserted His servant. He had been placed in perilous positions very often, but not one single instance had occurred in which God's strength was not sufficient for him. The trials to which he had been exposed had been varied—they had not assumed one form, only, but many. Yet in every case He who sent the trial had also graciously ordained a way of escape.

David could not put his finger upon any entry in his diary and say of it, "Here is evidence that God will forsake me." In looking back through his whole life, from the time when he kept his father's sheep, and slew the lion and the bear, onward to the day when he challenged the Philistine, and upward to this moment—when he had just escaped from his blood-thirsty pursuer—he could not find a solitary fact which should be proof that God had changed His mind and would leave His anointed to fall into the hand of his cruel enemy.

Now, mark—when you and I doubt God's Word there is this to be said of it—we mistrust it without a cause. I bear my willing testimony that I have no reason to doubt my Lord, nor even the shadow of a reason—and I think that you who were in Christ many years before I knew Him can say that since you have trusted in Him you have never once had any reason to suspect His faithfulness, or to imagine that He would cast you away.

Brethren, we condemn not a man without evidence. Shall we condemn our loving Lord without evidence? I challenge Heaven and earth and Hell this morning to bring any proof that God is untrue. From the depths of Hell I call the fiends, and from this earth I call the tried and afflicted Believers, and to Heaven I appeal and challenge the long experience of the blood-washed host—there is not to be found in the three realms a single one who can bear evidence of a fact which should disprove the goodness of God, or weaken His claim to be trusted by His servants.

Now let our unbelief be thrown out. Let our sense of justice expel it at once. Let us be just to God as well as to man. And if never yet has He failed any of His people, or broken a solitary promise, far be it from us to doubt or to be unbelieving—

***"Thus far we prove that promise good
Which Jesus ratified with blood.
Still He is gracious, wise and just,
And still in Him let Israel trust."***

But, again, what David said in his heart was not only without evidence but *it was contrary to evidence.* What reason had he to believe that God would leave him? Rather, how many evidences had he to conclude that the Lord neither could, nor would, leave him? "Your servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." That was good reasoning. Why not reason like that now, David? Why not say, "Your servant slew the Philistine, your servant escaped from the javelins of Saul, when the mad monarch would have pinned him to the wall.

"Your servant escaped from all the devices of Doeg, your servant escaped when Saul pursued him in the tracks of the wild goats and in the

caves of Engedi. Your servant escaped out of the power of Achish, the Philistine. And, lo, this Saul, who seeks my head, out of his hand shall I escape also"? That would have been a rational conclusion, a proper way of dealing with evidence. But to say, after such love and kindness past, "He will let me sink at last," was to draw a lying conclusion and to bring in a verdict directly contrary to the evidence.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, your case is similar—at least mine is. O Lord God! You have not left us at any time. We have had dark nights, but the star of love has shone forth amid the blackness. We have had our cloudy days, but our sun has never set until we have had glimpses of sunlight from Heaven. We have gone through many trials but never to our detriment, always to our advantage. And the conclusion from our past experience—at least I can speak of my own positively—is that He who has been with us in six troubles will not forsake us in the seventh.

He has said, "I will never, never leave you and will never, never, never forsake you." Do not think I repeat these "nevers" too often. I repeat the text just as I find it in the Greek. What we have known of our faithful God goes to show that He will keep us to the end—and even to the last He will be our Helper. Go not, then, contrary to evidence. What should we say of a jury who, after having heard a case in which the verdict should evidently have been "Not Guilty," should, nevertheless, say "Guilty"? Let the earth ring with the cry of indignation. A man has been condemned not only unjustly but in the very ties of evidence which proved his innocence!

O Heaven and earth! Ring with the universal indignation of honest men, that we should think God untrue, when all the evidence of our past lives goes to prove that He is true and faithful to His Word—

***"Our Savior's Word abides sure,
His record is on high,
He who has made our souls secure,
Was never known to lie.
Munitions of stupendous rock
Our dwelling place shall be.
There shall our souls without a shock
The wreck of nature see."***

Thirdly, this exclamation of David was *contrary to God's promises*. Samuel had poured the anointing oil on David's head—God's earnest and promise that David should be king. Let David die by the hand of Saul and how can the promise be fulfilled? Many times had God assured His servant David that He had chosen the son of Jesse to be the leader of His people. Let him die, and how can that be true? It was, therefore, contrary to the promise of God that David should fall by his enemy's hand.

Christian! It is contrary to every promise of this precious Book that you should become the victim of the lion of Hell. How, then, could He be true who has said, "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 never forget you." What were the value of that promise—"The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed. But My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you"? Where were the truth of Christ's words—"I give unto My sheep eternal life. And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them Me, is

greater than all and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand"?

Where were the Doctrines of Grace? They would be proved to be a lie if one child of God should perish! Where were the veracity of God, His honor, His power, His Divine Grace, His Covenant, His oath, if any of those for whom Christ has died and who have put their trust in Him, should nevertheless be cast away? Oh, by this precious Book which you believe to be true, unless you are prepared to cast it away as a vile thing of falsehood, distrust not your Lord but rather say—

***"The Gospel bears my spirit up.
A faithful and unchanging God,
Lays the foundation for my hope
In oaths and promises and blood."***

But further, this wicked exclamation of David was *contrary to what he himself had often said*. Here I convict myself, I remember on one occasion, to my shame, being sad and doubtful of heart and a kind friend took out a paper and read to me a short extract from a discourse upon faith. I very soon detected the author of the extract—my friend was reading to me from one of my own sermons. Without saying a word he just left it to my own conscience, for he had convicted me of committing the very fault against which I had so earnestly declaimed.

Often might *you*, Brethren, be found out in the same inconsistency. "Oh," you have said, "I could trust Him though the fig tree did not blossom and though there were no flocks in the field, and no herd in the stall." Ah, you have condemned the unbelief of other people, but when it touched you, you have trembled. And when you have come to run with the horsemen, they have wearied you, and in the swellings of Jordan *you* have been troubled. So was it with David. What strong words he had often said when he addressed others! He said of Saul, "His time shall come to die. I will not stretch out my hand and touch the Lord's anointed."

He felt sure that Saul's doom was signed and sealed. And Yet, in the hour of his unbelief, he says, "I shall yet one day fall." What a strange contradiction was that! What a mercy it is that *God* changes not, for we are changing two or three times a day! Our own utterances, our own previous convictions are clean contrary to the idea that He can ever leave us or forsake us. I appeal, as did that ancient worthy who appealed from Philip drunk to Philip sober, I appeal from Philip unbelieving to Philip in a proper state of mind.

I bring up before you your own thoughts, your own emotions, your own joyous shouts of song, your own psalms of victory—and I ask you to make these consistent with your present doubts. "Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war should arise against me, in this will I be confident." That is David. "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." That is David, too. "I will love You, O Lord, my strength! The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler and the horn of my salvation and my high tower. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies."

That is David. "I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul." That is David again. Do not fetch up any other evidence. Let the man convict himself.

His unbelief is absurd from his own showing. So with you, and with me, Brethren. We are great fools when we doubt God and that is saying the best of it. What the worst of it is, God only knows. O Lord, from this great sin do deliver us!

Yet once more. This exclamation of David was *contrary to the facts*. I mean not merely contrary to the facts that were in evidence, but contrary to the facts that were transpiring at that very moment. Where was Saul? Saul was seeking a miserable witch of Endor, to raise Samuel from the dead. The spears of the Philistines were being sharpened for the battle, and the arrows were being made ready upon the string that should reach the heart of the king of Israel. And yet here is David, just within a short period of attaining the kingdom and of seeing Saul slain, saying, "I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul."

Oh, if he could have read the mysteries, if he could have understood what the right hand of God was doing and what the Eternal One designed for him, he would never have whined thus his unbelief. So with you, and with me. "Ah, but," you say, "it is not so with me this morning. I am brought very low." Yes, and God is getting ready to bring you up very high. "Ah, but my trouble is a very dreadful one." Yes and His bare arm is a very potent one, and He knows how to deliver His children. "Yes, but I do not see." No, and you do not *need* to see. It is still being done.

God's purposes are ripening. Now, do not misjudge them! Do not ante-date the time of your deliverance, but patiently wait and quietly hope. I know that some of us, when we have escaped from our trials, have said, "Well, if I had known it had been so, I would not have been so troubled about it." Just so. And now, I pray you, though you do not know it, yet still believe it, and do not run contrary to the fact in doubting God. You are very poor, are you? But still you take care of your children.

What would you say to your child if he were sitting down at the table crying. "What do you cry for, child?" "Because there is no food for me." "Why, silly child," you say, "I was just cutting a slice from the loaf. Do not cry till you are sure there is no food." The Lord says to us often, "What do you cry for, silly child? This is what I was doing behind the mysteries of My Providence, getting ready some sweet and precious mercy for you."—

***"The clouds you so much dread,
Are big with mercies and shall break
With blessings on your head.
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His Grace.
Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face."***

II. But I must now, while my strength shall hold out, proceed to the second part of the discourse, namely, HOW WAS IT THAT DAVID CAME TO THINK THUS OF HIS GOD?

The first answer I give is, *because he was a man*. The best of men are men at the best, and man at the best is such a creature that well might David himself say, "Lord, what is man?" If we always performed feats of faith, onlookers might imagine that we were demi-gods. In truth, I say that the feats which a man of faith can do, are only surpassed by the doings of the Almighty One Himself. Next to omnipotence is faith. No, not

next to it in some respects, for faith can do all that omnipotence can, when God makes it strong.

What were the hosts of the Philistines to Samson? “Heaps upon heaps with the jawbone of an ass, have I slain a thousand men.” And what were the pillars of the temple to him? He bowed himself with all his strength and pulled down the goodly palace of the Philistines upon the princes and upon the assembled multitudes. Faith can do everything. But if faith never gave place to unbelief, we might be tempted to lift up the Believer into a demi-god and think him something more than mortal.

That we might see that a man full of faith is still a man—that we might glory in infirmities, since by them the power of God is the more clearly proved—therefore God was pleased to let the feebleness of man grievously show itself. Ah, it was not *David* who achieved these former victories but *God’s Grace* in David. And now, when that is removed for a moment, see what Israel’s champion becomes!

But again—you must consider that *David had been exposed to a very long trial*. Not for one week, but for month after month he had been hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. Now, a man could bear *one* trial, but a perpetuity of tribulation is very hard to bear. To lay one’s head down upon the block seems to me to be comparatively easy. But to be strapped, as were some of the martyrs, to a stake and be roasted at a slow fire, hour after hour, while the limbs wither in the heat, must have been awful. The martyrdom of an hour is sudden glory, but the martyrdom of a life—there needs to be something more than human to endure this.

To be crucified, to have the hands and feet nailed fast, but the vital parts intact. To have all the pangs of death, with all the strength of life! Now, such was David’s trial—always safe but always harassed—always secure through God but always hunted about by his foe. No place could give him any ease. If he went unto Keilah, then the citizens would deliver him up. If he went into the wood of Ziph, then the Ziphites betrayed him. If he went even to the priests of God, there was that dog of a Doeg to go to Saul and accuse the priest.

Even in Engedi or in Adullam he was not secure. He was secure, I grant you, in God—but always persecuted by his foe. Now, this was enough to make the wise man mad, and to make the faithful man doubt. Do not judge David too harshly—at least judge just as harshly yourselves. I think that if we also were tempted, we should fall as he did.

Then again, you must remember, *David had passed through some strong excitements of mind*. Just a day or so before he had gone forth with Abishai in the moonlight to the field where Saul and his host lay sleeping. They passed the outer circle where the common soldiers lay and quietly and stealthily the two heroes passed without awaking any. They came at last to the spot where the captains of the hundreds slept and they trod over their slumbering bodies without arousing them.

They reached the spot where Saul lay, with his spear stuck in the earth at his bolster and his cruse of water standing, that he might refresh himself if he awoke in the night. And Abishai said, “The Lord has delivered him into your hands. Let me smite him; I will smite him but this once.” David holds back Abishai’s hand. He will not permit it but he says, “As

the Lord lives. The Lord shall smite him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed." So he escaped from this temptation, as he had previously, when he only cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, instead of smiting him as he might have done in the caves of Engedi.

Now, Brethren, a man may do these great things helped by God, but do any of you know that it is a sort of natural law with us, that after a strong excitement there is a reaction? I will give you a picture. There is Elijah yonder. He has built an altar unto the Lord his God. The priests of Baal have built another. Elijah appeals to God. "He that answers by fire, let him be God." The priests of Baal supplicate their god. He answers not. They cut themselves with lancets and with knives. Their dumb idol could not affirm his own deity.

Elijah mocks them. "Cry aloud," said he, "for he is a god; perhaps he sleeps and needs to be awakened." So in grim sarcasm he stirs up the wrath of the priests of Baal. No answer comes. Now it is Elijah's turn. He bows the knee and lifts up his hands to Heaven. The flame descends. Be astonished, you unbelievers! It licks up even the water in the trenches and the twelve consecrated stones are themselves consumed and are carried in smoke to Heaven, even as the flame of the burnt-offering.

"Take the Prophets of Baal, let not one escape," cries the stern Elijah. He grasps one of them and drags him down the hill and the willing people follow, dragging by the hair of their heads the false priests down to the brook. And then, stripping to his sleeves, he dyes himself with the gore and blood of these, the haters of God, and the betrayers of His people, till the brook runs red with the smoking blood of Baal's priests. Now what will happen after that? When Elijah gets away from all this heroic daring, because he is a man, there will be a reaction—and lo, he is afraid of Jezebel, who hunted for his life!

He cries, "Let me die. I am no better than my fathers." And he hides himself, till God says, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Now if Elijah, the most iron saint of ancient times, felt the result of human weakness, much more might we expect it of David. So that again I say, we are not to judge him too severely, unless we feel prepared with the same measure that we mete to him to mete out to ourselves.

But there was another reason we are *not* to excuse David. He sinned, and that not merely through infirmity, but through evil of heart. It seems to us that David had put off prayer. In every other action of David's you find some hint that he asked counsel of the Lord. He says to Abiathar, "Bring here the ephod." And he enters upon no enterprise without first asking of the Urim and Thummim what was God's mind. But this time what did he talk with? Why, with the most deceitful thing that he could have found—with his own heart, for "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."

I do not find that he mentioned it to God's priest. He did not make it a matter of prayer. He could not venture to pray when he undertook it himself. No, he acted on his own head and a man will soon find that head is full of addled brains that can judge without appealing to God. Having re-

strained prayer, he did the foolish act. He forgot his God, he looked only at his enemy—and it was no wonder that when he saw the force and strength of the cruel monarch and the perseverance of Saul's persecution—that he said, "I shall one day fall before him."

Brothers and Sisters, would you wish to hatch the egg of unbelief till it turns into a serpent? Put off prayer! Would you see evils magnified and mercies diminished? Would you find your tribulations increased sevenfold and your faith diminished in proportion? Put off prayer! I say unto you this day, if you will neglect your closet, all the troubles you have ever had shall be as nothing compared with what will yet come upon you. The little finger of your future doubts shall be thicker than the loins of your present mental anguish. You shall know what man can do when he leaves his God and you shall find out in the bitterness of your soul what an evil thing it is to leave the living fountain and hew out to yourself a broken cistern which can hold no water.

I have thus, I think, as well as may be, opened up the causes of David's unbelief. Some of them will hit your case, my Brothers and Sisters. You may find some portion here. Well, if you find out the cause, remember that the remedy lies somewhere near it. If a forgotten closet will make you weep, a frequented closet will make you smile. If the excitement of delight has been followed by depression, that excitement itself, if you seek it again, will be the best cure. And finally, your mind, made strong to endure these blessed excitements, shall be sweetly strengthened for the bliss of Heaven and on earth you shall be capable of enjoying the Heaven which some of the saints have known before they crossed the stream of death.

III. But I must hasten on, for my failing voice tells me I must soon conclude. But not until we have discharged, briefly, the third point—WHAT WERE THE ILL EFFECTS OF DAVID'S UNBELIEF?

It strikes me that this was one of the sins to which David referred, when he asked God to forgive the sins of his youth and his former transgressions. We have looked so often at his sin with Bathsheba that we have been apt to think he had no other faults. Whereas, one *must* say it—the life of David for some few months after this exclamation was sad. And one might wish it could be blotted out. It was sad, sad, indeed. But we will talk of these matters in detail, though briefly.

What did his unbelief make him do first? *It made him do a foolish thing*, the same foolish thing which he had rued once before. Now, we say a burnt child always dreads the fire. But David had been burnt and yet, in his unbelief, he puts his hand into the same fire again. He went once to Achish, king of Gath, and the Philistines said, "This is that David of whom they said, 'Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands.'" And David was greatly afraid and "feigned himself mad in their hands and scabbled on the doors of the gate and let his spittle fall down upon his beard," (which to the Eastern was the surest sign of his being mad if he despised his beard).

And they drove him away, for Achish said, "Why, then, have you brought him to me? Have I need of mad men, that you have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?" Now, he goes to the same Achish again! Yes, and mark you, my

Brethren, although you and I know the bitterness of sin, yet if we are left to our own unbelief, we shall fall into the same sin again. I know we have said, "No! Never, never. I know so much by experience what an awful thing this is." Your experience is not worth a rush to you apart from the continual restraints of Divine Grace.

If your faith fails, everything else goes down with it. And you, you gray-headed professor, will be as big a fool as a very boy, if God lets you alone. In fact, I must say it, reverencing as I do the hoary head, that of all fools in the world, old fools are the worst. I have seen more falls among aged Christians than among any other sort, till one has been apt to pray, "Lord, save those who are in the slippery paths of old age." I have often said there is no Scriptural example of a young man falling into any gross, great sin.

All the Scriptural examples are quite the other way, and think I might say, as the pastor of this Church, that the most sorrowful cases of excommunication we have ever had have been about men who had some gray hair on their heads, or were fathers of families. Far oftener than about the young. The reason being, I think, this—that often the old saint begins to rely on his past experiences—and if he does so it is all over with him. For we are just as much fools after seventy years' spiritual education, as we were when we first entered into the school—if the Lord leaves us to ourselves.

We do grow. We do learn, the Lord being with us. But if we are left, we are no stronger after we have been established in the faith, than we were before. I say again, if we were left at any moment, no matter who we may be, sin would soon be our pursuit, and iniquity our companion. We must offer the same prayer, "Hold You me up and I shall be safe," to the very end of the chapter, and we must finish our lives just as David finished the 119th Psalm with that confession, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments."

But next—for the beginning of sin is like the letting out of water and we go from bad to worse, *he went over to the Lord's enemies*. Would you have believed it—he that killed Goliath sought refuge in Goliath's land! He who smote the Philistines trusts in the Philistines! No. More. He who was Israel's champion, becomes the chamberlain to Achish, for Achish said, "Therefore will I make you keeper of my head forever," and David became the captain of the bodyguard of the King of Philistia and helped to preserve the life of one who was the enemy of God's Israel.

Ah, if we doubt God, we shall soon be numbered among God's foes. Inconsistency will win us over into the ranks of His enemies and they will be saying, "Why are these Hebrews here?" And the question will be passed round from man to man, "Is not this David of whom they said, 'Saul has slain his thousands but David his ten thousands?' What is David doing here?" Brother, if, "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall," I may, without wresting Scripture, say, "Unbelief goes before destruction and a doubting spirit before a fall," for so it is. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." "The just shall live by faith, but if any man turn back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him"—the two sentences put to-

gether as if the failure of our faith would surely lead to a turning back to sin.

Have patience with me while I notice once again that not only thus did David become numbered with God's enemies but that *he actually went into open sin*. You will read this chapter and the next and the next, at your leisure—and you will perhaps have leisure this afternoon. It will keep you from talking about ministers and about a great many other things that are just as well let alone on Sunday afternoons. For that is the general gossip of Sunday afternoon—"Did you ever hear Mr. So-and-So and Mr. So-and-So?"—ministers being thought a subject useful for Sundays—that is to say, the pulling of them to pieces.

However, if instead of that, you will read those chapters, you will be profited. David did two very evil things. He acted the part of a liar and deceiver. Harsh words, you will say, to use of David. But they are not too harsh. He went out and slew the Geshurites, and sundry other tribes, and this he did often. When he came back, Achish asked him where he had been and he said he had been to the south of Judah—that is to say, he made Achish believe that his incursions were made against his own people, instead of being made against the allies of Philistia.

This he kept up for a long time. And then, as one sin never goes without a companion, for the devil's hounds always hunt in couples, he was guilty of bloodshed, for into whatever town he went, he put *all* the inhabitants to death. He spared neither man, nor woman, nor child, lest they should tell the king of Philistia where he had been. So that one sin led him on to another. And this is a very sorrowful part of David's life. He that believes God and acts in faith, acts with dignity, and other men will stoop before him and pay him reverence. But he who disbelieves his God and begins to act in his own carnal wisdom, will soon be this and that and the other and the enemy will say, "Aha, aha, so would we have it." While the godly will say, "How are the mighty fallen! How has the strong man been given up unto his adversary!" O that God the Holy Spirit may preserve our faith in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, that so we may be preserved without spot until the day of His appearing!

Furthermore, not only was David guilty of all this, but he was on the verge of being guilty of still worse sin—*of overt acts of warfare against the Lord's people*. For David, having become the friend of Achish, when Achish went to battle against Israel, he said to him, "Know you assuredly, that you shall go out with me to battle, you and your men." And David professed his willingness to go. We believe it was only a feigned willingness. But then, you see, we convict him again of falsehood. The day comes when a decisive battle is to be fought and the lords of the Philistines go on before Achish.

"Where is David?" "Oh, David is with king Achish in the rear-guard," for the king had made him captain of his lifeguard. He was thus raised to a very high position, the companion of Achish, at his right hand—the commander of the men who were to protect the king in case of danger. Now, there is David, and he is going up against his own people, to fight against his own king, to do mischief against God's own chosen land. It is true that God interposed and prevented it. But this was no credit to David, for you

know, Brethren, we are guilty of a sin, even if we do not commit it, if we are *willing* to commit it.

And so was it in this case—we are sorry to have to say it, even when the lords of the Philistines interposed and said, “Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which you have appointed him and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us. And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? And what have you found in your servant so long as I have been with you unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king?” David was still professing a kind of unwillingness to depart, while God knows he was glad enough to get off so evil an errand. What a mercy it is we have some enemies, for God makes our enemies often our best friends.

I forget who it is, but I think it is old Bishop Hall, in his meditations, who says, “When the Lord’s people have a deadly cancer, there are many of their friends who are too dainty to let the lances in but their foes will do it out of spite, and then they get cured thereby. For often does the Lord let our enemies pierce us in some sore which would have gathered and destroyed us, if it had not been that their cruel wound becomes life to us from the dead.” So these lords of the Philistines were David’s best friends.

To conclude. The last effect of David’s sin—and here it blessedly came to close—was this—*it brought him into great trial*. Let me tell the story briefly, and I have done. While David was away with king Achish, the Amalekites invaded the south and attacked Ziklag, which was David’s town. For some reason or other they did not put to death any of the inhabitants, but they took away the whole of the men, the few who were left, the women and children, all their household goods and stuff and treasures. They took away all. And when David came back to Ziklag, there were the bare walls and empty houses. And Ahinoam and Abigail, David’s two wives, were gone, and all the mighty men who were with him had lost their wives and little ones.

And as soon as they saw it, they lifted up their voices and wept. It was not that they had lost their gold and silver but they had lost everything. That exiled band had lost their own flesh and blood, the partners of their lives. Then they mutinied against their captain and they said, “Let us stone David.” And here is David, a penniless beggar, a leader deserted by his own men, suspected by them probably of having traitorously given up the town to the foe. And then it is written—and O how blessed is that line!—“And David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.”

Ah, *now* David is right. *Now* he has come back to his proper anchorage. Blessed afflictions, that drive him back to where he ought to have been all the time! Sin and smart go together. The child of God cannot sin with impunity. Other men may. You that do not fear God may go and sin as you like, and often meet with very little trouble in this world as the consequence of it. But a child of God cannot do that. “You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities.” And so David had the rod more sharply than he had ever had it before, because he had doubted his God.

And what are we? Many of us believe in Christ. But what are we, if God should leave us? Let us heartily join in the prayer, "Lord, increase our faith; hold You us up and we shall be safe!"

As for you who have no faith in Christ, this last word. If temporary unbelief is so dreadful, what must habitual unbelief be? "He that believes not shall be damned." "He that believes not is condemned already, because he believes not." God help you, Unbeliever, to trust Jesus. It is life to you. It will be life to you in this world and in the world to come. Trust Him with your soul and He will never forsake you but to the end He will keep you. And in the end He will bless you and without end He will glorify you to be with Himself forever.

May the Lord bless the words we have uttered and make us faithful, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

***"It is Jesus speaks, the sinner's friend,
Dejected saint, today.
Lift up your head, nor downward bend,
But sing your fears away.
Why do you, like the turtle, grieve?
Cast all your cares on Me;
My Grace sufficient is, believe,
In every state for you.
To guard you from ten thousand ills,
And make your standing sure,
Sufficient are My shalls and wills,
That must and shall endure.
At every time, in every place,
In safeguard you shall be,
And find My everlasting Grace
Sufficient still for you.
Jesus, assist us to believe,
For slow of heart are we,
Grace from Your fullness to receive,
And thus to honor You."***

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A SEARCHING QUESTION NO. 3079

A SERMON
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*“To whom do you belong?”
1 Samuel 30:13.*

This question was addressed by David to a young man of Egypt who was servant to an Amalekite. He had fallen sick and his master, being in a hurry, had left him to perish alone in the field and had gone his way. Had the master taken his servant with him and nursed him, his own life might have been preserved, but God avenged this poor servant, who had been so neglected, by making him the means of revealing to David where his master was—and David's sharp and swift sword soon overtook him and his brother plunderers.

At the very outset we learn from this question that we cannot have servants, or children, or friends without being compromised by them. If we have servants, people will be sure to ask them the question, “To whom do you belong?” Should they bear a bad character, or show a bad training, or seem to be so wretched that they betoken a pinching, grasping, grinding, cruel, tyrannical master, people will soon be able to read our characters in our servants' faces! They will draw their own conclusion as to what the master is from what the servants are. It is more especially fair to do so in the case of a man's children. Some children are very pert, willful, ill-mannered. Were anyone to ask whether there was a rod kept in the house they came from, he might be very speedily answered, “No.” And if you pressed the question, “To whom do those children belong?” it would soon be found that they belonged to some self-indulgent parents who were too fond of themselves to take the trouble to correct their children. You can generally read a man's character in his boy's face and in his boy's conduct and conversation. We should remember this and see that we send our children forth not needing to be ashamed that they should tell to whom they belong! The same is the case with regard to Church members. Any member whom we receive into this Church may compromise all the rest. If any one member is found in bad or suspicious company, the question is sure to be asked, “To whom do you belong?” Instead of laying down his delinquencies at his own door as being inconsistent, men are quite sure to put them at our door. The minister is generally the horse that is saddled with his people's sins. He would willingly bear them on his own heart in deep humiliation before God if he knew that his people also would bear them in penitence before God. Let every Church member remember that he

imperils the honor of the whole Church by his inconsistency—and it may be said of him, “That man sinned not alone.”

This, however, is not my main point tonight. I am going to aim at something which directly affects our eternal position and standing before God. I shall first open up the question in a different sense from that in which it was asked by David. Then, secondly, I will try to guide you in your response. And when I have done that, I will give a few words of good advice to those who have individually and respectively to furnish the answer.

I. First, then, “TO WHOM DO YOU BELONG?”

This is *a question of universal pertinence*. We may put it to any man most fairly because there is an owner both of the Church and of the world. As for the Church, we are Christ’s. “You are not your own, for you are bought with a price.” The Church is Christ’s body, “the fullness of Him that fills all in all.” And the world, too, is not without its owner. We read of one whose name is “the prince of this world”—“the prince of the power of the air; the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.” While some men are the children of God, are all other men to be regarded as orphans? Oh, no! Christ says to them, “You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do.” There are no unowned men! We are, every one of us, either ranked under the banner of Prince Immanuel, to serve Him and fight His battles, or else beneath the Black Prince, Satan—enrolled to do evil and to perish in our sins! It is a very proper question, then, to ask of every man and woman, “To whom do you belong?”

The question, too, is *one which can be answered*, because a man must belong either to one owner or the other. It is no use troubling people with questions which are too mysterious to be answered, but this is plain and pointed. You either belong to God or else you belong to His enemy. You are either bought with Jesus’ precious blood or else you are still a bond slave of Satan. Which are you? If it were possible to dwell in an intermediate state, this might be a puzzling enquiry, but there are no neutralities in religion. There is no such thing as being in the valley while the two hosts are on either side on the mountains. You are either this day standing shoulder to shoulder with Prince Immanuel’s warriors, or else, when the muster roll of the army on the opposite side is read, you are most certainly numbered there. All attempts to serve God and the world must end in bitter failure. Mark Antony yoked two lions together and drove them through the streets of Rome—but no man shall ever yoke together the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the lion of the Pit. No man ever tries to walk on two sides of the road at the same time unless he is intoxicated—and it argues gross intoxication of mind and spirit when a man attempts to serve both God and mammon—to win eternal life, and yet to live like the spiritually dead! This is a question which you *can* answer, my Brothers and Sisters. Now do not play with your eternal interests and say, “Well, I am sure I don’t know.” You *do* know. Do not put it off with quibbles! Do not say you will make the enquiry by-and-by.

You know right now whether you are a child of God or not! Or else if you are half-afraid that you are not the Lord's, and you are saying—

“‘Tis a point I long to know”—

then you will never be happy until you do know—and you will not be able, I think, to give sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids till, in answer to my question, “To whom do you belong?” you can say, “I belong to Christ. He has bought me with His blood and I am His in life and shall be His in death—and His throughout eternity.”

This is *a question of a very practical character*. We are sometimes told that we preach upon subjects which do not concern the ordinary race of men. Secularism comes and tells us that we are dealing with another life, when we ought to be teaching people what is proper to be done in *this* life. Yes, but that is a mistake, for there is nothing more practical for daily life than true religion—and this question is one of the practical ones which true religion suggests! Remember, dear Friends, to whomever you belong, you are quite sure to serve your master. If you belong to Satan, I know that you will do Satan's work. Perhaps you will do it in his uniform and there is some sort of honesty in that. Perhaps you will curse, and swear, drink and so on—that is serving Satan in Satan's uniform. But it is just possible that you will do Satan's work in Christ's uniform! You may wear the cross on your arm and yet, for all that, there may be a devil in your heart, like some of the old inns we have read of which had the sign of an angel outside, but they served the devil within. Doubtless there are many men of this sort nowadays. If you are Satan's, you will serve Satan. But if you are Christ's, you will serve Christ. You surely will, for it is written of all Christ's servants. “The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again.” Christ's servants serve Him. Is it not written, “His servants shall serve Him”? Your whole life on earth will be affected by your answer to the question, “To whom do you belong?”

But then *remember what a weight hangs upon this question with regard to your eternal interest*. It will all depend, at the last, as to whether you shall enter Heaven or Hell, on this question, “To whom do you belong?” If you belong to Christ, this shall be your reception, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” But if you do not belong to Christ, what will be the fate of the best of you? You will knock at the gate with the piteous cry, “Lord, Lord, open to us!” And what will be the answer? “I know you not.” If you had belonged to Christ, He would have known His own property. But in that day He will disown you, and tell you, “You are not Mine; depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

“Eternal weal or endless woe” hangs, then, on this question, “To whom do you belong?” Harps of gold, songs of celestial harmony, crowns of eternal glory are yours if you belong to Christ! But oh, if you are not Christ's and you live and die without an interest in Him, then groans,

cries, awful despair, looks of burning wrath and piercings of almighty vengeance must be your everlasting doom! To sail forever across a sea of anguish and neither founder nor reach a port. To climb forever the burning mountain of despair and neither sit still, nor perish, nor yet reach the summit! Forever climbing knee-deep in grief and agony and yet never, never finding an end to it all is your eternal reward! Be careful, then, that you answer this question very solemnly as in the sight of God, for on this—

**“Slender thread,
Hang everlasting things.”**

I am not afraid that you will not eventually answer the question. I am afraid, however, that you will say, “It does not matter just now.” It will matter very soon. How soon do men come to their graves? Full many of them stumble on them unawares! I saw a man the other day in as good bodily health as I think I ever saw any man to be. And soon after it was said to me, “Do you remember So-and-So?” “Yes.” “He is dead!” I drew my breath. Dead? Why the man looked as if he would certainly live for another twenty, or thirty, or forty years. Dead? Can it really be so? And then I met the next day with another who said, “You know Mrs. So-and-So’s husband?” “Yes.” “He is dead.” Sometimes I begin to wonder that I find anybody alive! At the head of such a vast congregation as this, there are so many journeys to the tomb for me to make that I feel, perhaps, more than any of you, that I live in a dying world! Standing with my foot once or twice a week on the edge of the grave and saying, “Dust to dust, and ashes to ashes,” over so many of my fellow mortals, I dare not look upon you as living men, but only as men who are soon to die! Would God that I could add of all of you, that I look upon you as men and women who are going to the land of the living where they never die!

This question will press hard upon you, dear Friends, when you have to go upstairs to undress for your last sleep. It will press hard upon you when they wipe the clammy sweat from your brow and death begins to glaze your eyes. It will press hard upon you, Sinner, when the death rattle is in your throat and you have the gloomy answer in your soul, “I fear that I am not Christ’s, but am without God and without hope.” But O, Christian, what a solace it will yield you, at the last, to be able to feel, when the eventide has come and you are about to sleep the last great slumber, “I am Christ’s! And I go to rest upon His bosom till the trumpet of the archangel shall startle my slumbering ashes and shall bid them rise in the image of my dear Redeemer! I am Christ’s! And though I die, yet shall I live. I am Christ’s! And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God!”

II. Secondly, with great brevity, I WILL TRY AND HELP YOU IN MAKING A RESPONSE.

It will go a great way towards it, dear Friends, if you will *tell me where you were born*. “Where I was born?” asks one, “are you desirous to know how old I am?” Well, I do mean that though perhaps in a different sense from what you put upon my enquiry. You were all born once and it matters nothing where you were born that time, or very little indeed. But

were you ever born a second time? You do not know? What? Do you not know that you were ever privileged with a new birth! Were you born a second time, you would know it! A man cannot have spiritual life in him and yet be unconscious of it. He may sometimes doubt, but there are other times when he knows and feels the operation of new faculties. Were you ever born twice? Recollect that every man who is only born once will have to die twice—but the man who is born twice will only have to die once—and even that once dying will be no moribund experience, for it will only be the gate into eternal life! To be born twice is to escape the second death, but to be born only once is to fall into the second death forever. Are you born-again? If so, you are Christ's.

“But,” says one, “what is it to be born-again? Is it to have a few drops of water sprinkled on my forehead by a priest? Or is it to be immersed in floods of water?” These regenerate not the soul. It is to have a new nature put into you by the Holy Spirit according to God's own Covenant promise, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” This it is to be born-again! And if you are not born-again, however moral or good you may be, you do not belong to Christ—you belong to Satan—and with him you have your part.

It will help you, again, to answer this question if you will first answer another, *What company do you keep?* I do not mean to ask whether you associate with the immoral. Of course if you do that, that settles the point at once. You who associate with persons of immoral lives should recollect that you will be bound up with this company—and as you have been with thieves, drunkards and harlots here, you will go with them where they go—and be bound up with them in bundles to be burned. But I mean, where is your chosen company? It is very hard for some people to get the company they would wish to have. Some of you are placed in positions in life where you are obliged to associate very much with the ungodly, but I will put the question so as not to hurt your mind, “When you can pick your company, where do you go?” It is written, in the Acts of the Apostles, “And being let go, they went to their own company.” Now, when you are let go and can go where you like, where *do* you go? I was sitting lately by the bedside of a poor woman who was very ill. We had been talking of the things of God. And among other evidences which she was mentioning as to her reason for believing that she was going to Heaven before long, she said, “I never could bear the company of the wicked and I do not think that God will send me, in the next life, where I never would go in this life. I have always loved to be with His people and though I have been the vilest of them all, yet still I love to bow with them in prayer and to join with them in holy song. I have had my happiest times when I have been with the people of God and I think He will not take me away from the people I have associated with in my lifetime.” If you belong to Satan, you know you will go with your fellow servants. But if you belong to Christ, you will look out for those who wear Christ's uniform and you will go with them. The old proverb says that “Birds of a feather flock together.”

There is a story told in the old legends, of a holy young man who once went to the theater but the devil went into the theater that night—the devil does go there occasionally—and he took this young man off with him! A certain holy man, to whom this young man belonged, went to the devil and he said, “You have taken away one of my disciples. He belongs to me. He is a very excellent young man and you have no business with him!” “Ah!” said the devil, “but I found him on my premises and I took him.” I think the devil was right for once! Let those who would be accounted Christians and yet occasionally associate with the world in its doubtful pleasures, think of that story and keep off the devil’s premises! You will be sure to be known by your company! A young man who had begun to associate with bad companions told his father he did not know that he could get any hurt by doing so. The father stooped down and, taking the tongs in his hands, picked up a black coal and told his son to hold it. The son said he would rather not. “It is not hot,” said the father, “it won’t burn you.” “No,” replied the son, “but if it won’t burn me, it will blacken me.” So you who wish to have an exemplary character before God and before men, remember that if ill company does not burn you to your hurt, it is sure to blacken you by damaging your reputation! However, as I said before, we can tell you by your company. Dead fish float down the stream, but live fish swim against it. Do you swim against the stream? Have you learned to go against the current? Do you strive to get up, up towards the great Source of everything that is good and true or do you float along the stream of pleasure with the mass of the world? Then you may readily know to which side you belong.

You may judge, again, by this, *What is your dialect?* I suppose a person well up in the dialects of the various counties would very soon discover that I came from Essex. At any rate, if I meet a West-country man, or a brother from the Midland counties and especially one from Yorkshire, I know within a little time whereabouts he came from by his particular twang. There is a dialect about people by which you can tell them. Not that you can always tell a man’s character in five minutes, but give him time—let him talk his heart out and especially let him get a little cross, or a little excited—and you will very soon find him out by the words he uses. What is your dialect? Is it anything that is impure, loose, low? Or do you desire to speak as Christ spoke, so that your conversation may be seasoned with salt and may minister edification to your hearers.” It is a very bad sign when a man professes to be religious, yet lets an oath out now and then—when he comes to a place of worship regularly and yet says some very nasty, ugly words sometimes. I am afraid there is death in that pot! If the Lord does not cure you in the mouth, depend upon it, He has not cured you down deep in the heart. There is a common saying about a man being “good at bottom,” but I do not believe in it, for if a man is not good on the top, you may depend upon it that he is not good at bottom! If you went to Covent Garden Market and wanted to buy some fruit, and you found it rotten at the top of the basket, you would not believe the salesman if he said, “My dear Sir, it is very good at bottom.” “No,” you would say, “excuse me, but you

always put the best on the top.” So, when a man’s talk is not what it should be—and his conduct and conversation are contrary to those of a Christian—you may rest assured that he does not belong to Christ, for they who are Christ’s have had their hearts washed and He who has washed their hearts will be quite sure to wash their mouths.

Another thing by which you may judge to whom you belong is, *What have you learned to do?* Servants will learn something from the masters to whom they are apprenticed. If you have been an apprentice to the devil, I have no doubt that you have learned his trade—you will be an enemy to God—you will be a despiser of Divine things. But if you have been with Christ, it will be said of you as it was of Peter and John, “They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.” They had something of His boldness, His meekness, His gentleness, His holiness, His courage, His affection, His disinterestedness, His honesty and, in their measure, they had His virtues. If you have been looking into the glass of God’s Word and have not, in some degree, been conformed to the image of Christ, tremble for yourselves! Christ saves sinners, but He does not save them in their sins, but *from* their sins! And when Christ once gets His hands upon a man, He casts out the devils that once dwelt in him and makes him a new creature in Christ Jesus, being henceforth bound to do God’s will and to walk according to God’s Word!

If you tell me that you belong to Christ, I should like to ask a witness or two. Oh, it is so easy to get into a Christian Church and make a profession! The Lord knows that I have used my best diligence—and I can say the same of my Brothers, the elders—we use our best diligence to allow none to join this Church who are not sincere Believers. But, after all, what does our vigilance amount to? If you choose to be hypocrites, you can easily deceive such poor creatures as we are! The best witnesses, I think, which you could bring as to your belonging to Christ would be witnesses of this kind—you can pray very nicely at the Prayer Meeting. You could preach a bit if you were asked. You seem such a good man when you come among God’s people. But *I would like to ask your wife about you*. How does he behave to you, Ma’am? Because if this man does not make a good husband, he is no Christian, for Christianity makes a man the best of husbands, the best of sons, the best of fathers, the best of brothers, the best of servants! If you are a servant, I would like to ask your master about you. Servants who stand about lazily, propping up walls and then talk about being Christians, may talk a long while before their masters will believe them! Masters and mistresses, too, who are always in bad tempers and making much of little faults, and unkind to servants, may talk as long as they will about being like Jesus Christ, but their servants would need a microscope to see the likeness!

I would like to ask the man who professes to be a Christian, *what the angels see him do*. There is a little room upstairs, your closet of devotion, or perhaps you use your bedside for prayer. I would like to know how you behave there. It is not difficult for a man who never prays to make a fine boast of his religion. It is not enough for you to kneel down, but do

you ever have any real dealings with God? Do you have real communion with Christ? Do you talk to Him as a man talks to his friends? Do you pour out your heart before Him? Oh, the heart-searching God knows how many there are who are fair trees outside, but are rotten within—how many there are who are but painted harlots! We sometimes read in the papers of certain people who can enamel faces, hide blotches and make them look beautiful. I wish there were none of this enameling in the Christian world, but I am afraid that there is a great deal of it. People get enamelled up to a certain pitch of piety, but what you need is a religion that will stand the test of the hour of death, of the Day of Judgment and of the eyes of the all-searching and all-seeing God! And if you have not this, it matters not how delicately and daintily you may walk before men, nor how much you have been esteemed and respected—God will pull you down and give a dreadful answer to the question—“To whom do you belong?”

Ah, this is a question for the preacher and it is one which he may well ask himself! There are many of you here, perhaps, who have been blessed under my word, who think that surely, surely, the preacher cannot be deceived. But ah, he knows what it is to search his own heart with an awful earnestness, lest, after having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway! My Brothers, you who are associates with me in as deacons and elders, I charge you before the living God, do not take your piety at second-hand. The oldest of you may well search yourselves, for your experience, after all, may be a lie. Unless you have closed with Christ and have really passed from death unto life, you will not enter into Heaven because of your office! And you members of this Church, I do pray you, on your knees ask the Master again and again to search your hearts and see if there is any wicked way in you and lead you in the way everlasting, for unless your heart is right with Him, you cannot answer this question, “To whom do you belong?” without a shudder and a fear!

III. I must soon close and as I have so little time left, I will only spend a few minutes in GIVING YOU SOME GOOD ADVICE.

To the Christian let me speak first. You belong to Christ, Christian. You say you do—you know you do. Well, then—what? *Obey Him.* If anybody else wants to be master over you, do not allow it, for you are Christ’s. Let His Word be your law. Let His wish be your will.

You belong to Christ, then *love Him.* Let your heart embrace Him. Let your lips sing of Him. Let your whole soul be filled with Him. You have been bought with His precious blood—remember the price of your redemption and do not give a cold heart in return for the warm heart’s blood of your Redeemer.

You belong to Christ, then *trust Him.* Rest nowhere but on Him. Day by day sit beneath His Cross and view Him as your Savior.

You belong to Christ, then *be decided for Him.* Never halt, or raise a question about your allegiance to Him. You are Christ’s, you are God’s—then cling to Him. In the olden times, the inhabitants of the county of Durham would never go to the wars with our kings because they claimed

an immunity granted them by the bishop. They were called “holy workfolk.” They had to attend to the cathedral. So let it be with you, Christian—never go into sin because you are one of the holy workfolk. You are engaged in Christ’s work and you cannot, therefore, serve Satan. Keep close to Christ to whom you belong—so close to Him that you may grow up into His image and become like unto He whose you are and whom you serve!

To those who cannot say that they love Christ, I have a word of advice to give. It is clear that you belong to Satan. Friend, might I whisper a word in your ear? *I would run away from my master if I were you!* He is a bad master. He treats you shamefully. The joys he gives you are all rotten. They look very pretty, like the apples of Sodom, but when you have grasped them, they turn into a handful of ashes! After all, your days of pleasure have no real pleasure in them and your mirth is poor stuff, isn’t it? You have spent your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfies not.

Recollect that *one of these days Satan will desert you*. I mean when you come to die. The pleasures which he gives you now will all fail you then. I will tell you what I saw, this afternoon, as I came here. I daresay you will think it a very curious thing for me to mention. I saw half-a-dozen donkeys turned out on Clapham Common to feed, with the snow two or three inches deep, and I thought to myself, “I daresay the counter-mongers have been using these poor donkeys to do their work all morning, and this is all that they get for it at last.” That is very much how the devil uses his servants—he works them as hard as ever he can while they are alive, and then he has nothing to give them when their life-work is done. How piteously did Hume’s poor mother write to her son when she lay a-dying! She had, at one time, made a profession of religion, but had been induced by her son to give it up. And now she wrote to him and said, “Come and give me some of the consolations of your philosophy which you promised me.” Poor Hume had no consolations for her in his philosophy—it was just like being turned out to feed on Clapham Common with all the snow fallen on it! It is a poor, dreary thing—there is nothing there for the soul to feed upon, try as long as it may.

Oh, think of what this master of yours will do for you when you come to stand in the Day of Judgment! He cannot plead for you—he will be a fellow sinner with you! He will be arraigned at the same bar to be punished as well as you! You may look to him, but if he can do anything, it will only be to laugh at you and increase your torment!

If I were you, I say again, I would run away from my master. I do not read that that poor man who was sent into the fields to feed swine ever gave his master any notice when he left him. His master “sent him into his fields to feed swine; and he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine ate, but no man gave unto him.” Then came the thought, “I will arise and go to my father,” and away he went! And he did not stop to give his master three months’ notice, or tell him he must get

someone else! The fact is, it was such a bad place that he was glad to get away from it directly—and he had such a bad master that he started off at once. I would to God that some sinner here would do the same tonight! Give your master no notice! He does not deserve any. Leave him! You have been sailing under the black flag all these years—thirty, forty, fifty, sixty—there is a gray-headed sinner yonder, 70 years sailing under that black flag! Down with it, Sir! Thank God it is not nailed to the mast! It will be when you die—if it is there then, it will be nailed there to fly there forever! But it is not nailed to the mast now. Down with it! Down with it! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would pull it down and put up the blood-red Cross in its place, that you might sail henceforth under the flag of Immanuel!

“Well,” says one, “I would gladly change my master, but would Christ have me?” Try Him! Try Him as the prodigal son tried his father. Go and put your head on your Father’s bosom and weep out such a confession as this—“I have sinned against Heaven, and before You, and am no more worthy to be called Your son.” And before you have finished your confession, you will hear Him saying in your soul, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.” God is far more ready to forgive you than you are to ask Him for pardon! Only acknowledge your sin, plead the blood of Jesus, put your trust in Him and my God, my Father, will delight to receive you! He will say, “This, My son, was dead, and is alive again. He was lost, and is found. “He will be glad! His angels will rejoice and His saints will make melody!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 SAMUEL 30:1-25.**

David had joined the army of the Philistines, but, as the Philistine lords suspected him, he was obliged to leave, so he went back to the little city of Ziklag, which King Achish had given him.

Verses 1, 2. *And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire, and had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way.* They were roving bands of marauders and, no doubt, preserved the women alive to sell them for slaves, the main object of those robbers being gain.

3, 4. *So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters were taken captives. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep.* Weary with their marching, they had hoped to rest at home. But now that everything was gone, the strong men, who were not often moved to weeping, wept till they could weep no longer! The very sources of tears were dried up by the exceeding heat of their grief.

5, 6. *And David’s two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail, the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. And David was*

greatly distressed; for the people spoke of stoning him. These rough men, who had not all joined him from the best of motives, now turned against him for having left the city defenseless.

6. *Because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.* [See Sermon #1606, Volume 27—ZIKLAG—OR, DAVID ENCOURAGING HIMSELF IN HIS GOD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Blessed faith that finds a secure shelter even amid the ashes of his burned home, and when even his own followers have turned against him!

7, 8. *And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray you, bring me here the ephod. And Abiathar brought there the ephod to David. And David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them? And He answered him, Pursue: for you shall surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.* The Hebrew runs, "Pursue, for overtaking you shall overtake, and recovering you shall recover." That is to say, the work shall be done perfectly—and so it was.

9-17. *So David went, he and the six-hundred men that were with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed. But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred stayed behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor. And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water; and they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights. And David said unto him, To whom do you belong? And from where are you? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick. We made an invasion upon the south of the Cherethites, and upon the coast which belongs to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire. And David said to him, Can you bring me down to this company? And he said, Swear unto me by God that you will neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring you down to this company. And when he had brought him down, behold they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah. And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled.* It is noteworthy that the four hundred who escaped were equal in number to the whole of David's attacking force, so that, manifestly, God was with these valiant men, or else they would have been completely outnumbered.

18-20. *And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives. And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor anything that they had taken to them: David recovered all. And David took all the flocks and the herds, which they drove before those other cattle, and said, This is David's spoil.* [See Sermon #2017, Volume 34—DAVID'S SPOIL—

Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] That which was over and above what had been taken from Ziklag was very properly appropriated by David. I thought, as I read that, “David recovered all,” how truly it can be said that the greater Son of David has recovered all. All that was lost by sin, our glorious and victorious Captain has recovered! What, then, shall be His spoil? It was foretold that “He shall divide the spoil with the strong.” Let your hearts and mine, and all we are, and all we have, be yielded up to Him—and let us say of it all, “This is Jesus’ spoil, and to Him be Glory evermore!”

21. *And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to stay at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that were with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them.* There are some fainting and sick folk detained at home—I pray our blessed Lord to salute every one of them wherever they are at this moment.

22, 23. *Then answered all the wicked men and men of Belial, of those who went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away, and depart. Then said David, You shall not do so, my brethren.* They were poor brethren for David to have. They were brethren by race, but not brethren by Grace. Yet David was wise in speaking to them as he did. It is always well, when you are opposing people, to do it courteously. You can often prevail with soft words if you have strong arguments. David said, “You shall not do so, my brethren.”

23-26. *With that which the LORD has given us, who has preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? But as his part is that goes down to the battle, so shall his part be that carries by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day.* [Verses 21-25 formed the text of the last Sermon preached by Mr. Spurgeon in the Metropolitan Tabernacle—#2208, Volume 37—THE STATUTE OF DAVID FOR SHARING OF THE SPOIL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

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

“DAVID’S SPOIL”

NO. 2017

**BY C. H. SPURGEON,
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, APRIL 15, 1888.**

***“This is David’s spoil.”
1 Samuel 30:20.***

We have earlier gathered spoil for ourselves out of David’s behavior in the hour of his sorrow at Ziklag and we will now turn to the other side of this leaf in his history and receive instruction from the time of his victory. But we must not do this till we have refreshed our memories with the story of his conduct under distress. When he came to the city he found it burned with fire, the property of himself and his comrades carried away and what was worse, all their wives and their sons and their daughters gone into captivity. In the madness of their grief the people turned upon their leader, as if he had led them into this calamity. He was the only calm person among them, for he “encouraged himself in the Lord his God.”

With due deliberation he waited upon the Lord and consulted the oracle through the appointed priest and then, under Divine guidance he pursued the bandits, took them by surprise, recovered all of his people’s goods and captured a large booty which the Amalekites had collected elsewhere. David, who had been the chief object of the people’s mutiny and the leader of the successful pursuit of the robbers, most properly received a special portion of the spoil and concerning it the words of our text were spoken, “This is David’s spoil.”

We shall now look into this victorious act on the part of David with the view of finding spiritual teaching in it. David may be regarded as a very special type of our Lord Jesus Christ. Among the personal types David holds a leading place—for in so many points he is the Prophetic foreshadowing of the great and glorious Son of David. Whenever David acts as the man after God’s own heart, he is the picture and emblem of the One who is still more after God’s own heart—even the Christ of God.

David, under Divine guidance, pursued the Amalekites who had come as thieves to smite and to burn and carry away captives. The marauders were overtaken and slaughtered and a great spoil was the result. David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken. “And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor anything that they had taken to them: David recovered all.” We are told several times over in the chapter that nothing was lacking—“David recovered all.” When our Lord Jesus worked out our redemption, He recovered all and left nothing in the enemy’s hand. All glory to His name!

But over and above, David took great store of cattle and jewels and gold and silver and so forth, which belonged to the Amalekites, and out of this a bountiful portion was taken which was set apart as David’s spoil. David’s men, in the moment of their despair, had spoken of stoning him.

But now, in the morning of their victory, with general acclamations, they determine that David shall have, as his portion of the spoil, all the cattle which belong to the Amalekites themselves. And so, driving these in front, as they return to Ziklag, they say, "This is David's spoil." I think I hear them, as they drive the bullocks and the sheep before them, shouting right lustily, "This is David's spoil."

Now, using David as the type of Christ, I want, if I can, to set all David's men—all Christ's men—shouting with all their hearts, "This is Jesus' spoil!" He it is of whom Jehovah says, "I will divide Him a portion with the great and He shall divide the spoil with the strong." He has a grand reward as the result of the great battle of His life and death. We will even now award to Him the spoil and cry, "This is David's spoil," feeling, all the while, as the Psalmist did when he said, "You are more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey."

I. We begin with the first observation that practically all the spoil of that day was David's spoil and in truth all the good that we enjoy comes to us through our Lord Jesus. He has been given as a Leader and a Commander to the people and every victory they win is due to Him and to Him alone. Without Him we can do nothing and without Him we can obtain nothing. All that we once possessed by nature and under the Law, the Spoiler has taken away. By our own efforts we can never regain what we have lost—only through our great Leader can we be restored and made happy. We ascribe unto Jesus all our gains—even as David's men honored *their* captain.

For, first, David's men defeated the Amalekites and took their spoil—but it was for David's sake that God gave success to the band. God's eyes rested upon His chosen servant, the Lord's anointed, and it was not for the warrior's own sakes but for David's sake that God guided them to the hosts of Amalek and gave them like driven stubble to their sword. How much more true it is to us that every blessing, every pardoning mercy, every delivering mercy, is given to us through Him who is our Shield and God's Anointed! It is for the sake of Jesus that we are pardoned, justified, accepted, preserved, sanctified. Only through this channel does the mercy of God come to us.

The Lord God says, "Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel! Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways." And we, in response to that, can answer, "Not unto us, not unto us but unto the name of the well-Beloved be praise and honor and glory forever and ever!" Since everything comes to us because of Christ Jesus, we may say of every Covenant mercy, "This is David's spoil." On this blessing and on that favor, yes, on them all, we see the mark of the Cross. These are all fruits of our Redeemer's passion, the purchase of His blood. Again we say with gratitude, "This is David's spoil."

Moreover, David's men gained the victory over Amalek because of David's leadership. If he had not been there to lead them to the fight—in the moment of their despair they would have lost all heart and would have remained amidst the burning walls of Ziklag a discomfited company. But David encouraged himself in the Lord and so encouraged all his despond-

ing followers. Drawing his sword and marching in front, he put spirit into them—they all followed with eager step because their gallant leader so courageously led the way.

This is exactly our case, Beloved, only we are even more indebted to our Lord Jesus than these men were to David. The Lord Jesus Christ has been among us and has fought our battle for us and recovered all that we had lost by Adam’s Fall and by our own sin. It is written of Him, “He shall not fail nor be discouraged.” You know how He sets His face like a flint, how stout-hearted He was to accomplish the work of our redemption and how He ceased not till He could cry victoriously, “It is finished”—

***“Our glorious Leader claims our praise
For His own pattern given.”***

Following at His feet, we, too, fight with sin. Treading in His footsteps, we, too, overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. Have you ever heard Him say, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”?

And you, dear Brothers and Sisters—whatever victories you win, whatever spoils you divide—will acknowledge that it is through Jesus that you have conquered. They said of Waterloo that it was a soldier’s battle and the victory was due to the men. But ours is our Commander’s battle and every victory won by us is due to the great Captain of our salvation. Let the crown be set upon His head, even on the battlefield and let us say of every sin that we have overcome, every evil habit that we have destroyed, “This is David’s spoil.”

We had never won this victory if Jesus had not led us—we have it for His sake. We have it under His leadership. Without exception, all the saints on earth and in Heaven confess this to be true—

***“I ask them from where their victory came?
They, with united breath,
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
Their triumph to His death.
They marked the footsteps that He trod,
His zeal inspired their breast,
And, following their incarnate God,
Possess the promised rest.”***

I will not say more upon this point but only ask you to remember that by nature we had all lost everything. We lost the garden with all its Paradiacal joys. Lost this world, the very earth bringing forth thorns and thistles to us. Lost life, lost hope, lost peace, lost the favor of God. But Jesus has recovered all. All that the first Adam lost the second Adam has restored. David recovered all and Jesus has recovered all. We ourselves were lost. But Jesus has brought us back from the hand of the enemy. He has given us ourselves, if I may use such an expression—and now we who were dead are alive again—the lost are found. Once, every faculty of ours was being used for our own destruction but now, sanctified by the Grace of God, all is being used for God’s glory and for our own ripening and perfecting.

Jesus has recovered us for ourselves and for our God—the prey has been taken from the mighty and the lawful captive has been delivered. Yes, and our Lord Jesus has recovered for us the future as well as the

past. Our outlook was grim and dark, indeed, till Jesus came. But oh, how bright it is now that He has completed His glorious work! Death is no more the dreaded grave of all our hopes. Hell exists no longer for Believers. Heaven, whose gates were closed, is now set wide open to every soul that believes. We have recovered life and immortal bliss. We are snatched like brands from the burning and made to shine like lamps of the palace of the great King.

We are set up to be forever trophies of the conquering power of Jesus, our glorious David. Look at all the saints in Heaven in their serried ranks and say of them all, “This is David’s spoil.” Look at the blood-bought Church of God on earth—the ten thousands that are already washed in His blood and following at His feet—we may say of all this ransomed flock, “This is David’s spoil.” Each one of us, looking at himself and all his past and all his future, may say, “This, too, is David’s spoil.”

Christ has done it, done it all and unto His name let the whole host shout the victory. I feel as if I could stop the sermon and ask you to sing but it will be better if I content myself with repeating the hymn—

***“Rejoice, you shining worlds on high,
Behold the King of Glory near!
He comes adorned with victory,
He made our foes before Him flee.
You heavenly gates, your leaves display,
To make the Lord the Savior’s way!
Laden with spoils from earth and Hell,
The Conqueror comes with God to dwell.
Raised from the dead, He goes before;
He opens Heaven’s eternal door—
To give His saints a blessed abode,
Near their Redeemer and their God.”***

II. But the most interesting part of our subject is this—all the booty was practically David’s spoil but there was a part of it which was not recovered but was a clear gain. They recovered all they had lost and over and above there was a surplus of spoil from the defeated foe. Now, in the great battle of Christ on our behalf He has not only given us back what we lost but He has given us what Adam in his perfection never had. And I want you to dwell upon that—because this part of it is peculiarly our Lord’s spoil. Those good things which we now possess over and above what we lost by sin come to us by the Lord Jesus. Now that the Son of God has come into the field He is not content with restoration—He turns the loss into a gain—the Fall into a greater rising.

And first, dear Friends, think—in Christ Jesus human nature is lifted up where it never could have been before. Man was made in his innocence to occupy a very lofty place. “You made him to have dominion over all the works of Your hands. You have put all things under his feet.” Man would have enjoyed that dominion had he never fallen but he never could have obtained what he has now gained, for, “we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor.”

And we see in Jesus human nature joined in mysterious union with the Godhead. I never know how to speak about this miracle of the Divine in-

carnation. We are men and women, poor creatures at our very best. Yet in Christ Jesus our dignity is perfectly amazing. Angels excel in strength and beauty but no angel was ever joined to the Godhead as manhood is now united to God. The nearest being to God is a man. The most noble existence—how shall I word it?—the most noble of all beings is God. And the God-Man Christ Jesus, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily is with Him upon His Throne.

It is a wondrous honor, this—that manhood should be taken into intimate connection, yes, absolute union with God! For listen—through Jesus Christ we are this day made the sons of God which angels never were. “Unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son”? But He has said this to us. Christ took not up angels but He took up the seed of Abraham and He has made the believing seed of Abraham to be the sons of God. Listen again—“And if children, then heirs. Heirs of God.” God’s heirs! What a word is this! How simple but how sublime! I know how to say it but not how to expound it!

It does not want explanation and yet its depths are fathomless. Every Believer is God’s heir—the heir of God. Could this have been and there been no Fall and no redemption? Children and heirs are more than was ever spoken of in Eden. Yes, listen yet again. Now we are one with God in Christ Jesus. For it is written concerning our Lord, “We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.” Close as the marriage union is, yet Paul declared, when he spoke of it, “This is a great mystery—but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” Unfallen manhood was never declared to be one with the Son of God and yet through the Covenant of Grace this is our position.

We are joined by vital, real, conjugal union to Jesus Christ the Son of the Highest, very God of very God. And this is an elevation so transcendent that I feel bowed down beneath the weight of glory which is revealed in us. The most glorious being next to God is man. A sinner most shameful, once, but now in Christ a child accepted and honored! What can I say of this but, “This is David’s spoil”? This is what Jesus brought us. It came to us by no other way or method. Neither do we know in what way or method it could have been given to us but by the will of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is given to us through Jesus Christ, our elder Brother and our covenant Head and unto Him let the glory of it be ascribed world without end.

Another blessing which was not ours before the Fall and therefore never was lost but comes to us as a surplus, is the fact that we are redeemed. You sang just now that verse—

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

It is clear that you could never have known free grace and dying love if Jesus had not come to redeem you. Unfallen intelligent spirits will say in eternity, “Do you see those beings bowing nearest to the eternal Throne? Do you see those well-beloved creatures? Who are they?” Spirits that have lived in other worlds will come crowding up to the great metropolis and

will say one to another, “Who are those courtiers—those that dwell nearest to God? Who are they?”

And one spirit will say to another, “They are beings whom God not only made as He made us but whom the eternal Son of God redeemed by blood.” And one shining one will say to his fellow, “What is that? Tell me that strange story.” Then will his companion delight to say, “They were saved because the Son of God took their nature and in that nature died.” “Wonderful! Wonderful,” his friend will answer, “How could it be? Was there suffering for them and pain for them and bloody sweat for them and death for them on the part of the ever-blessed Son of God?” The answer, “It was even so,” will be news full of astonishment even to the best instructed celestial mind.

Spirits will look at us with wonder and say, “What strange beings are these? Others are the work of God’s hands but these are the fruit of the travail of His soul. On others we see the marks of Divine skill and power but here we see the tokens of a Divine sacrifice—a Divine blood-shedding.” Truly, we may say of our redemption, “This is David’s spoil.” That you and I should be such wonders as we must be in being redeemed beings is, indeed, something given to us by Jesus over and above what Adam lost. And throughout eternity all the sacred brotherhood of the redeemed by blood will be princes in the courts of God—the aristocracy of Heaven—for “He has made us kings and priests unto God.”

We shall be creatures who have known sin and have been recovered from its pollution. There will be no fear of our being exalted with pride, or drawn away by ambition as the now-apostate angels were. For we shall constantly remember what sin did for us and how grievous was our fault. We shall forever remember the price at which we were redeemed. And we shall have ties upon us that will bind us to an undeviating loyalty to Him who exalted us to so glorious a condition. It seems to me wonderful beyond expression—the more I consider it, the more I am astonished. A spirit that has never fallen cannot be trusted in the same way as one that has fallen and has been delivered and has been newly-created and blood-washed and has been gifted with an abiding and eternal character!

Such a being shall never fall because it is forever held by cords of love eternal and bonds of gratitude infinitely strong. Cords of love which will never let it waver in holy service. It is a work worthy of a God to create such beings as we shall be—since we shall be securely bound to voluntary holiness. And our wills, though always free, shall be immutably loyal to our Lord. As the twice-born we shall be the most noble of God’s works. We shall be the first fruits of His creatures. We shall be accounted as the royal treasure of Jehovah. Then shall we sit with Christ upon His Throne and reign with Him forever. “This is David’s spoil.”

We receive blessings unknown to beings who have never fallen. I sometimes murmur to myself—and sweet music it has been as I have quietly murmured it—we are the elect of God. Election is a privilege most high and precious—what can exceed it in delight? This also is David’s spoil. We are also redeemed from among men—the redemption of the soul is precious. “This is David’s spoil.” We are covenanted ones, with whom God

has entered into bonds of promise, swearing by an oath to keep His Word—this, too, is David’s spoil. Where had you ever heard of redemption, election, covenant and such-like words if it had not been for the blessed Christ of God who has redeemed us by His blood?

Sing, then, you who have received back your lost inheritance—and sing more sweetly, still, you who have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies according as the Father has chosen you in Christ Jesus. Sing aloud unto His holy name—and say of your special privileges—“This is David’s spoil.”

Again—to my mind it is a very blessed fact that you and I will partake of a privilege which would have been certainly unnecessary to Adam and could not by Adam have been known and that is, the privilege of resurrection. We shall die unless the Lord should suddenly appear. I would not have you, Brothers and Sisters, look upon the prospect of death with any sort of dread. I know that death is associated with pain. But nothing can be more absurd. There is no pain in death—pain belongs to life. Death, even naturally, puts an end to pain. But death to the Believer is undressing as His Lord undressed—putting off garments of which, I think, we need not be so very fond, for they do fit us ill.

And oftentimes, when our spirit is willing, it is hampered by these garments of clay—for the flesh is weak. Some look with intense delight to the prospect of the Savior’s coming—as a means of escape from death. I confess I have but slender sympathy with them. If I might have my choice, I would prefer, of the two, to die. Let it be as the Lord wills. But there is a point of fellowship with Christ in death which they will miss who shall not sleep. And it seems to me to have some sweetness in it to follow the Lamb wherever He goes, even though He descend into the sepulcher. “Where should the dying members rest but with their dying Head?” That grave of our blessed Lord, if He had not meant us to enter it, would have been left an empty tenement when He came away. But when He came out of it, He left it furnished for those that should come after Him. See there the grave clothes folded up for us to use!

The bed is prepared for our slumber. The napkin is laid by itself because it is not for the sleeper but for those who have lost His company. Those who remain behind may dry their eyes with the napkin but the grave clothes are reserved for others who will occupy the royal bedchamber. When great men died in olden times their servants took away the tapestry or hangings of their chambers. But if those hangings remained it was for the convenience of guests who were invited to occupy my lord’s rooms. See, then, our Lord expects us to lie in His royal bedchamber for He has left the hangings behind Him! To the retiring room of the tomb we shall go in due time. And why should we be grieved to go? For we shall come forth again—we shall rise from the dead.

“Your brother shall rise again,” was Mary’s consolation from the Master’s lips. It is yours. We are not going to a prison but to a bath wherein the body, like Esther, shall be purified to behold the King. It is our joy to be sure that, “as the Lord our Savior rose, so all His followers must.” We do not know much about the resurrection of the body and therefore we

will not attempt to describe it. But surely it will be a delightful thing to be able to dwell forever in a body that has been in the grave and has had fulfilled in it the sentence, "Dust you are and unto dust shall you return," but which has been raised again by that same power which raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

We shall inhabit a body which shall no more see corruption, or be subject to weakness, or pain, or decay but shall be like the glorified person of our Lord. Oh, there is sweetness in the thought that we shall in this forever have fellowship with our risen Lord! Children of the resurrection, dread not death! Your faces are turned to the sun. Press forward to the light eternal and fear not to pass through the death-shadow—it is no more than a shadow. If you cannot leap over the grave you can pass through it. It shall be your joy to rise when the morning breaks and to be satisfied. For you shall wake up in His likeness. As for the resurrection, "this is David's spoil," this is Christ's gift and benefit. The resurrection from the dead is the peculiar glory of Christianity. The *immortality* of the soul had been taught and known before, for it is a Truth of God which even reason itself teaches.

But the resurrection of the body comes in as the last and crowning effort of our spirits—and "this is David's spoil." Let me not weary you. The topic might well interest us on several occasions. It is too large to be confined to one discourse. Our singular relation to God and yet to materialism is another rare gift of Jesus. God intended, by the salvation of man and the lifting up of man into union with Himself, to link together in one the lowest and the highest—His creation and Himself. Shall I make it very plain? These poor substances—earth, water and the like—they seem far down in the scale. God makes a being that shall be, as an old Puritan used to say, half soul and half soil—even *man* who is both spirit and dust of the earth.

We find in him water, salts, acids, all sorts of substances combined to make up a body and married to this is a soul, which is brother to the angels and akin to Deity. Materialism is somewhat exalted in being connected with spirit at all. When spirit becomes connected with God and refined materialism becomes connected with a purified spirit by the resurrection from the dead, then shall be brought to pass the uplifting of clay and its junction with the celestial. Do you not see how God, in the perfecting of His gracious purpose through the resurrection of the dead, causes His glory to be reflected even upon what we regard as poor material substances, gross and mean?

Try and get at my meaning again. Quakers, whom I greatly respect, get rid of the two ordinances by denying that they are of perpetual obligation. They banish Baptism—they put away the Lord's Supper. I have sometimes wished that I were able to agree with them because my whole spirit and tendency are towards the spiritual rather than the ritual. But if anything is plain to me in Scripture, it is that Jesus Christ did command us to be baptized in water in the Triune name and that He bade His disciples remember Him in the breaking of bread and in the drinking of the cup. The danger of men's making too much of outward forms was encountered for

some wise purpose. It was, I think, because God would have us know that even the material, though it can only enter the outer court, is still to be sanctified unto Himself.

Therefore, water, bread and wine—all material substances—are used not only as symbols but as tokens that all created things shall be ennobled and sanctified. Look, Sirs, “Creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope.” Through man’s sin this outward world became blackened, darkened and degraded. But God intends, through man, to lift up the nethermost extremities of His creation into a greater nearness to Himself than they ever could have reached by any other means. And this is how it comes about. We are taking up with us, as it were, the earth which makes a part of ourselves.

We are drawing up with ourselves the earth in those simple symbols with which we worship God. We are ourselves lifted up as spirits and we are soon to be lifted up as spirits enshrined in purified bodies and thus we bring the whole creation of God into nearer contact with Himself. Hence it is that we are called “kings and priests.” What can the dead earth do in worship till there comes one who worships God as the world’s priest? What can the fields and woods and hills say in the worship of God? They are dumb till a tongue attempts the holy task of uttering their praise. You and I are made of such stuff as the world around us and yet we are the compeers of angels.

We are brothers to the worm. And this body of ours is but a child of mother earth on which it lives. See, then, how mother earth worships God through us and dull, dead matter, finds life and song. Behold the mists and the clouds become a steaming incense of praise to God through men like ourselves, who, because Christ was slain, have been made kings and priests unto God.

I wish you would, rather than listen to me, try and muse upon the wonderful position which redeemed men do now occupy and will occupy forever and ever. For my own part, I would not change places with the angel Gabriel—not if he gave me his swift wing to boot—for I believe that an infinitely greater honor belongs to the least of God’s children than to the very highest of God’s servants. To be a child of God—oh, bliss!—there is no glory that can excel it. But all this is a special gift to our humanity through our Lord Jesus. “This is David’s spoil.”

Our manifestation of the full glory of God is another of the choice gifts which the pierced hands of Jesus, alone, bestow. Principalities and powers shall see in the mystical body of Christ more of God than in all the universe besides. They will study in the saints the eternal purposes of God and see therein His love, His wisdom, His power, His justice, His mercy blended in an amazing way. They will admire forever those whom God loves and delights in, those whom He keeps as the apple of His eye. Those whom He rejoices over and of whom He has said that He will rest in His love and He will rejoice over them with singing. Truly it has not entered into the heart of man to guess at the glory of God in the saints—the exceeding glory which shall be revealed in us through Jesus Christ our

Lord. "This is David's spoil." Oh, come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us magnify the name of Jesus Christ!

III. I close with the most practical part of my sermon—that which we willingly give to Jesus may be called His spoil. There is a spoil for Christ which every true-hearted follower of His votes to Him enthusiastically. We have already seen that all things which we have are of Christ and that there are certain special gifts which are peculiarly of Christ. And now, what shall be David's spoil from you and from me?—

***"First, our hearts are His, alone, forever.
Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it,
Seal it for Your courts above."***

Of every believing heart it may be said, "This is David's spoil." You and I must give ourselves tomorrow to earning our daily bread and our thoughts must go, to a large extent, after earthly things in the common pursuits of everyday life. But our hearts, our hearts, are as fountains sealed for our Well-Beloved.

O mammon, you shall not have them! O pleasure, you shall not have them! These are David's spoil. Our hearts belong to Jesus, only. "My son, give Me your heart," is an Old Testament command but under the New Testament manifestation of love we fulfill it—"for the love of Christ constrains us. Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead—and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him which died for them and rose again." Let it be so that our whole heart is the sole possession of Jesus! We will neither rend it, nor cast lots whose it shall be, for "this is David's spoil."

Now there is another property I should like King Jesus to have and that is our special gifts. I know one who, before his conversion, was likely to sing and he often charmed the ears of men with the sweet music which he poured forth. But when he was converted he said, "Henceforth my tongue shall sing nothing but the praises of God." He devoted himself to proclaiming the Gospel by his song, for he said, "This is David's spoil."

Have you not some gift or other, dear Friend, of which you could say, "Henceforth this shall be sacred to my bleeding Lord?" Some peculiar faculty? Some choice piece of acquirement not generally possessed? Something in which you excel? I would that you had at least some little garden of flowers or herbs which you could so reserve that therein only Jesus should pluck the fruits. Say of the best gift you possess, "This is David's spoil." Is it not well to consecrate some part of the day and say, "This hour is Christ's"?

"I have my work to do, my business must be seen to—all is Christ's. But, still I will reserve a special season and wall it in, like a private garden, in which, with prayer and praise and meditation, I will commune with my Lord, or else in actual service I will honor His name." Say, "This is David's spoil." Come dear Heart, what do you mean to give Him? Surely you have some natural faculty or acquired skill which you can lay at His feet.

Moreover, while our whole selves must be yielded to the Lord Jesus there is one thing that must always be Christ's—and that is our religious

homage as a Church. Somebody says that the Queen is head of the Church. God bless her. But she is not head of the Church of Christ! The idea is blasphemous—headship “is David’s spoil.” Jesus Christ is Head over all things to His Church and nobody else can take that position. No one may dare to take the title of “head of the Church” without an usurpation of our Lord’s royal right.

Certain teachers of the Church claim authority over conscience and assert that they are infallible. I have heard it said that they are supreme guides but I do not believe it, because, “This is David’s spoil.” We have one infallible Teacher and that is Jesus Christ our Savior. We yield obedience to His every word and demand that others should do the same. Whatever He says to us by His Spirit in the Word of God is to us infallible Truth and we cease to dispute when Jesus speaks. But no man else shall dictate doctrine to us, for “This is David’s spoil.”

Jesus Christ must be sole Rabbi in the midst of His Church. We call Him Master and Lord for so He is. I would have you keep your conscience for Christ alone. Take care that no book ever overlaps the Bible, that no creed ever contradicts the form of sound words contained in God’s own Word—that no influence of minister or writer supplants the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Your soul’s obedience and faith belong to Jesus only—“This is David’s spoil.”

Lastly, have you not something of your own proper substance that shall be David’s spoil just now? That was a blessed act when the woman broke the most precious thing she had—her box of alabaster and let the perfumed nard stream down the Savior, anointing Him for His burial. She felt that the precious perfume was “David’s spoil.” There was no waste. In fact, no other gift ever went so completely to its purpose without being taxed on the road, for Jesus had it all. Kindly did He observe the loving honor which she paid Him. What if the ointment were sold and given to the poor? Yet it could never be so economically used as when it was all devoted to Him.

I do think it so pleasant sometimes to give Jesus Christ distinctly a gift from yourself of somewhat that you will miss. It is good to give to the poor but it has a daintier sweetness in it to do somewhat distinctly for Him, for the spread of His own glory and the making known of His own fame. “The poor you have always with you”—abound towards them in your charity whenever you will—but to your Lord at special seasons dedicate a choice gift and say, “This is David’s spoil.”

There was a poor woman once, whose little fortune could be carried between her finger and her thumb—her fortune I said, for it was all she had. Two mites, I am told, was all it came to. She took it—it was her all and she put it in the treasury. For this was “David’s spoil.” It belonged to the Lord her God and she gave it cheerfully. I do not know whether since the days of the Apostles anybody has ever given so much as that woman. I have not. Have you? She gave all her living. Not all her *savings* but all her living. She had nothing left when she gave her farthing—she loved so much that she consecrated all her living.

We sometimes sing—

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

But do we mean it? If not, why do we sing falsehoods? There was a man who, in the Providence of God, had been enabled to lay by many thousands. He was a very rich and respected man. I have heard it said that he owned at least half-a-million. And at one collection, when he felt especially grateful and generous, he found a well-worn sixpence for the plate, for that was David’s spoil! That was David’s spoil! Out of all that he possessed, that sixpence was David’s spoil! This was the measure of his gratitude!

Judge by this how much he owed, or at least how much he desired to pay. Are there not many persons who, on that despicable scale, reward the Savior for the travail of His soul? I shall not upbraid them. I shall not urge them to do more, lest I spoil the generosity of the large gifts they mean to bring. Let a hint suffice. For us, who are deep in the Redeemer’s debt, who have had much forgiven, who every day are bankrupt debtors to the measureless mercy of infinite love—for us no paltriness will suffice. We must give something which, if it is not worthy of Him, shall, at least, express the truth and warmth of the gratitude we feel.

God help us to be often setting aside this and that and the other choice thing and saying, “This is David’s spoil and it shall be a joy to my heart to give it!” We shall find much sweetness in buying our sweet-cane with money and filling our Lord with the fat of our sacrifices. It is Heaven for a true heart to give largely to Jesus. God bless you, dear Friends. May we come to the table of communion and meet with our glorious David there and feel His praises making music in our hearts! Amen.

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THE STATUTE OF DAVID FOR THE SHARING OF THE SPOIL NO. 2208

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 7, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that were with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them. Then answered all the wicked men and men of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away, and depart. Then said David, You shall not do so, my Brethren, with that which the Lord has given us, who has preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hands. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? But as his part is that Goes down to the battle so shall his part be that carries by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day.”
1 Samuel 30:21-26.

THOSE who associate themselves with a leader must share his fortunes. Six hundred men had left their abodes in Judea. Unable to endure the tyranny of Saul, they had linked themselves with David and made him to be a captain over them. They were, some of them, the best of men, and some of them were the worst—in this, resembling our congregations. Some of them were choice spirits whom David would have sought, but others were undesirable persons from whom he might gladly have been free. However, be they who they may, they must rise or fall with their leader and commander. If he had the city Ziklag given to him, they had a house and a home in it. And if Ziklag was burned with fire, their houses did not escape. When David stood amid the smoking ruins, a penniless and a wifeless man, they stood in the same condition. This rule holds good with all of us who have joined ourselves to Christ and His cause—we must be partakers with Him. I hope we are prepared to stand to this rule today. If there is ridicule and reproach for the Gospel of Christ, let us be willing to be ridiculed and reproached for His sake. Let us gladly share with Him in His humiliation and never dream of shrinking. This involves a great privilege, since they that are with Him in His humiliation shall be with Him in His Glory. If we share His rebuke in the midst of an evil gen-

eration, we shall also sit upon His Throne and share His Glory in the day of His appearing. Brothers and Sisters, I hope the most of us can say we are in for it—to sink or swim with Jesus. In life or death, where He is, there will we, His servants, be. We joyfully accept both the Cross and the Crown which go with our Lord Jesus Christ—we are eager to bear our full share of the blame, that we may partake in His joy.

It frequently happens that when a great disaster occurs to a band of men, a mutiny follows. However little it may be the leader's fault, the defeated cast the blame of the defeat upon him. If the fight is won, "it was a soldiers' battle"—every man at arms claims his share of praise. But if the battle is *lost*, blame the commander! It was entirely his fault—if he had been a better general, he might have won the day. This is how people talk—fairness is out of the question. So in the great disaster at Ziklag, when the town was burned with fire, and wives and children were carried away captive—then we read that they spoke of stoning David. Why David? Why David more than anybody else, it is hard to see, for he was not there, nor any one of them. They felt so vexed, that it would be a relief to stone *somebody*—and why not David? Brethren, it sometimes happens, even to the servants of Christ, that when they fall into persecution and loss for Christ's sake, the tempter whispers to them to throw up their profession. "Since you have been a Christian, you have had nothing but trouble. It seems as if the dogs of Hell were snapping at your heels more than ever since you took upon you the name of Christ. Therefore, throw it up and leave the ways of godliness." Vile suggestion! Mutiny against the Lord Jesus? Dare you do so? Some of us cannot do so, for when He asks us, "Will you, also, go away?" we can only answer, "Lord, to whom should we go? You have the Words of eternal life." No other leader is worth following! We must follow the Son of David. Mutiny against Him is out of the question—

***"Through floods or flames, if Jesus leads,
We'll follow where He goes."***

When a dog follows a man, we may discover whether the man is his master by seeing what happens when they come to a turn in the road. If the creature keeps close to its master at all turnings, it belongs to him. Every now and then you and I come to turns in the road and many of us are ready, through Divine Grace, to prove our loyalty by following Jesus even when the way is hardest. Though the tears stand in His eyes and in ours. Though we weep together till we have no more power to weep, we will cling to Him, when the many turn aside, and witness that He has the Living Word and none upon earth beside. God grant us Grace to be faithful unto death!

If we thus follow our Leader and bear His reproach, the end and issue will be glorious victory. It was a piteous sight to see David leaving 200 men behind him and marching with his much diminished forces after an enemy who had gone, he scarcely knew where, who might be 10 times stronger than his little band, and might slay those who pursued them. It

was a melancholy spectacle for those left behind to see their leader a broken man, worn and weary like themselves, hastening after the cruel Amalekite. How very different was the scene when he came back to the brook Besor more than a conqueror! Do you not hear the song of them that make merry? A host of men in the front are driving vast herds of cattle and flocks of sheep—and singing as they march, “This is David’s spoil!” Then you see armed men with David in the midst of them, all laden with spoil, and you hear them singing yet another song! Those that bring up the rear are shouting exultingly, “David recovered all! David recovered all!” They, the worn-out ones that stayed at the brook Besor, hear the mingled song and join first in the one shout, and then in the other, singing, “This is David’s spoil! David recovered all!”

Yes, we have no doubt about the result of our warfare. He that is faithful to Christ shall be glorified with Him. That He will divide the spoil with the strong is never a matter of question. “The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands.” The old Truth of God by which we stand shall never be blotted out—

**“Engraved as in eternal brass
The mighty promise shines!
Nor shall the powers of darkness erase
Those everlasting lines.”**

We are certain as we live that the exiled Truth shall celebrate its joyful return. The faith once for all delivered to the saints may be downtrodden for a season—but rejoice not over us, O our adversaries—though we fall, we shall rise again! Therefore we patiently hope, quietly wait and calmly believe. We drink of the brook Besor by the way and lift up our heads.

This morning I want to utter God-given words of comfort to those who are faint and weary in the Lord’s army. May the Divine Comforter make them so!

I. I shall begin by saying, first, that FAINT ONES OCCUR EVEN IN THE ARMY OF OUR KING. Among the very elect of David’s army—heroes who were men of war from their youth up—there were hands that hung down and feeble knees that needed to be confirmed. There are such in Christ’s army at most seasons. We have among us soldiers whose faith is real and whose love is burning and yet, for all that, just now their strength is weakened in the way and they are so depressed in spirit, that they are obliged to stay behind with the baggage.

Possibly some of these weary ones had grown faint because *they had been a good deal perplexed*. David had so wrongfully entangled himself with the Philistine king, that he felt bound to go with Achish to fight against Israel. I dare say these men said to themselves, “How will this end? Will David really lead us to battle against Saul? When he could have killed him in the cave, he would not, but declared that he would not lift up his hand against the Lord’s anointed! Will he now take us to fight against the anointed of God? This David, who was so great an enemy of Philistia and slew their champion, will he war on their behalf?”

They were perplexed with their leader's movements. I do not know whether you agree with me, but I find that half-an-hour's perplexity takes more out of a man than a month's labor. When you cannot see your bearings and know not what to do, it is most trying. When, to be true to God, it seems that you must break faith with man—and when, to fulfill your unhappy covenant with evil would make you false to your Christian profession, things are perplexing! If you do not walk carefully, you can easily get into a snarl. If Christians walk in a straight line, it is comparatively easy going, for it is easy to find your way along a straight road. But when good men take to the new cut, that by-path across the meadow, then they often get into ditches that are not on the map and fall into thickets and sloughs that they never reckoned upon. Then is the time for heart-sickness to come on. These warriors may very well have been perplexed and, perhaps, they feared that God was against them—and that now their cause would be put to shame. And when they came to Ziklag and found it burned with fire, the perplexity of their minds added intense bitterness to their sorrow and they felt bowed into the dust. They did not pretend to be faint, but they were *really* so, for the mind can soon act upon the body and the body fails sadly when the spirits are worried with questions and fears. This is one reason why certain of our Lord's loyal-hearted ones are on the sick list and must stay in the barracks for a while.

Perhaps, also, *the pace was killing to these men*. They made forced marches for three days from the city of Achish to Ziklag. These men could do a good day's march with anybody, but they could not foot it at the double quick march all day long. There are a great many Christians of that sort—good, staying men who can keep on under ordinary pressure, doing daily duty well and resisting ordinary temptations bravely. But at a push they fare badly—who among us does not? To us there may come multiplied labors and we faint because our strength is small.

Worst of all, *their grief came in just then*. Their wives were gone. Although, as it turned out, they were neither killed nor otherwise harmed, yet they could not know this—and they feared the worse. For a man to know that his wife is in the hands of robbers and that he may never see her again is no small trouble. Their sons and daughters were also gone—no prattlers climbed their father's knee, no gentle daughters came forth to bid them, "Welcome home." Their homes were still burning, their goods were consumed and they lifted up their voices and wept—is it at all amazing that some of them were faint after performing that doleful *miserere*? Where would you be if you went home this morning and found your home burned and your family gone, you knew not where?

I know many Christians who get very faint under extraordinary troubles. They should not, but they do. We have reason to thank God that no temptation has happened to us but such as is common to men and yet, it may not seem so. But we may feel as if we were especially tried, like Job. Messenger after messenger has brought us evil tidings and our hearts are

not fixed on the Lord as they ought to be. To those who are faint through grief I speak just now. You may be this and yet you may be a true follower of the Lamb—and as God has promised to bring you out of your troubles, He will surely keep His word. Remember, He has never promised that you shall have *no* sorrows, but that He will deliver you out of them all. Ask yon saints in Heaven! Ask those to step out of the shining ranks who came there without trial. Will one of the leaders of the shining host give the word of command that he shall step forward who has washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, but who never knew what affliction meant while here below? No one stirs in all that white-robed host! Not one comes forward? Must we wait here forever without response? Look! Instead of anyone stirring from their ranks, I hear a voice that says, “These are they which came out of great tribulation.” All of them have known not only tribulation, but *great* tribulation! One promise of the New Testament is surely fulfilled before our eyes—“In the world you shall have tribulation.” When trouble came so pressingly on David’s men, they felt their weakness and needed to stop at the bank of the brook.

Perhaps, also, *the force of the torrent was too much for them*. As I have told you, in all probability the brook Besor was only a hollow place which, in ordinary times, was almost dry. But in a season of great rain it filled suddenly with a rushing muddy stream, against which only strong men could stand. These men might have kept on upon dry land, but the current was too fierce for them and they feared that it would carry them off their feet and drown them. Therefore, David gave them leave to stay there and guard the stuff. Many there are of our Lord’s servants who stop short of certain onerous service—they are not called to do what their stronger comrades undertake with joy. They can do *something*, but they fail to do *more*—they can also bear certain trials, but they are unable to bear more—they faint because they have not yet come to fullness of growth in Divine Grace. Their hearts are right in the sight of God, but they are not in condition to surmount some peculiar difficulty.

You must not overdrive them, for *they* are the feeble of the flock. Many are too faint for necessary controversy. I have found a great many of that sort about lately—the Truth of God is very important, but they love peace. It is quite necessary that certain of us should stand up for the faith once delivered to the saints, but they are not up to the mark for it. They cannot bear to differ from their fellows and they hold their tongues rather than contend for the Truth of God. There are true hearts that, nevertheless, cannot defend the Gospel! They wish well to the champions, but they seek the rear rank for themselves. And some cannot advance any further with regard to knowledge—they know the fundamentals and feel as if they could master nothing more. It is a great blessing that they know the Gospel and feel that it will save them, but the glorious mysteries of the Everlasting Covenant, of the Sovereignty of God, of His eternal love and distinguishing Grace, they cannot compass—these are a brook Besor which, as

yet, they cannot swim. It would do them a world of good if they could venture in but, still, they are not to be tempted into these blessed deeps. To hear of these things rather wearies them than instructs them. They have not strength enough of mind for the deep things of God. I would have every Christian wish to know all that he can know of the revealed Truths of God. Somebody whispers that the secret things belong not to us. You may be sure you will never know them if they are secret, but all that is revealed you ought to know, for these things belong to you and to your children! Take care you know what the Holy Spirit teaches. Do not give way to a fainthearted ignorance, lest you be great losers thereby. That which is fit food for babes should not be enough for young men and fathers—we should eat strong meat—and leave milk to the little ones.

Yet these fainting ones were, after all, in David's army. Their names were in their Captain's Register as much as the names of the strong. And they did not desert the colors. They had the same captain as the stoutest-hearted men in the whole regiment. They could call David, "Master," and, "Lord," as truly as the most lion-like man among them! They were in for the same dangers, for if the men in front had been beaten and had retreated, the enemy would have fallen on those who guarded the stuff. If the Amalekites had slain the 400, they would have made short work of the two hundred. They had work to do as necessary as that of the others. Though they had not to fight, they had to take care of the stuff—and this eased the minds of the fighting men. I will be bound to say it was a great trial to them not to be allowed to march into the fight. For a brave man to see the troops go past him and hear the last footfall of his comrades, must have been sickening. Who could pleasantly say, "I am left out of it. There is a glorious day coming and I shall be away. I shall, until I die, think myself accursed I was not there, and hold my manhood cheap that I fought not with them on that glorious day." It is hard for brave men to be confined to a hospital and have no drive at the foe. The weary one wishes he could be in the front where his Captain's eyes would be upon him. He pants to smite down the enemies and win back the spoil for his comrades.

Enough of this. I will only repeat my first point—fainting ones do occur, even in the army of our King.

II. Secondly, THESE FAINTING ONES REJOICE TO SEE THEIR LEADER RETURN. Do you see, that when David came back, they went to meet him and the people who were with him. I feel very much like this myself. That was one reason why I took this text. I felt, after my illness, most happy to come forth and meet my Lord in public. I hoped He would be here and so He is! I am also glad to meet with you, my Friends. We are still spared for the war. Though laid aside a while, we are again among our Brothers and Sisters. Thank God! It is a great joy to meet you. I am sorry to miss so many of our Church members who are laid aside by this sickness, [influenza—see postscript of Sermon #2207] but it is a choice

blessing to meet so many of our kindred in Christ. We are never happier than when we are in fellowship with one another and with our Lord.

David saluted the stay-at-homes. Oh, that He might salute each one of us this morning, especially those who have been laid aside! Our King's salutations are wonderful for their heartiness. He uses no empty compliments nor vain words. Every syllable from His lips is a benediction. Every glance of His eyes is an inspiration. When the King, Himself, comes near, it is always a feast day to us! It is a high day and a holiday, even with the faintest of us, when we hear His voice! So they went to meet David and he came to meet them and there was great joy. Yes, I venture to mend that, and say there is great joy among us now! Glory be to His holy name, the Lord is here! We see Him and rejoice with unspeakable joy!

David's courtesy was as free as it was true. Possibly those who remained behind were half afraid that their leader might say, "See here, you idle fellows, what we have been doing for you!" No. He saluted them, but did not scold them. Perhaps they thought, "He will upbraid us that we did not manage to creep into the fray." But no. "He gives liberally, and upbraids not." He speaks not a word of upbraiding, for his heart pities them and, therefore, he salutes them—"My Brethren, God has been gracious to us. All hail!" David would have them rejoice together and give praise unto the Most High. He will not dash their cup with a drop of bitter.

Oh, for a salutation from our Lord at this good hour! When Christ comes into a company, His Presence makes a heavenly difference. Have you ever seen an assembly listening to an orator, all unmoved and stolid? Suddenly the Holy Spirit has fallen on the speaker and the King, Himself, has been visibly set forth among them in the midst of the assembly! And all have felt as if they could leap to their feet and cry, "Hallelujah, hallelujah!" Then hearts beat fast and souls leap high, for where Jesus is found, His Presence fills the place with delight. Now, then, you weary ones, if you are here, any of you, may you rejoice as you now meet your Leader and your Leader reveals Himself to you! If no one else has a sonnet, I have mine. He must, He shall be praised! "You are the King of Glory, O Christ! All Heaven and earth adore You. You shall reign forever and ever."

III. Thirdly, FAINT ONES HAVE THEIR LEADER FOR THEIR ADVOCATE. Listen to those foul-mouthed men of Belial, these wicked men, how they rail against those whom God has afflicted! They came up to David and began blustering—"These weaklings who were not in the fight, they shall not share the spoil. Let them take their wives and children and be gone." These fellows spoke with loud, harsh voices and greatly grieved the feebler ones. Who was to speak up for them? Their leader became their advocate!

First, do you notice, *He pleads their unity?* The followers of the son of Jesse are one and inseparable. David said, "You shall not do so, my Brethren, with that which the Lord has given us, who has preserved us." "We are all one," says David. "God has given the spoil, not to you, alone,

but to us all. We are all one company of brothers.” The unity of saints is the consolation of the feeble. Brothers and Sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ would refresh His wearied ones by the reflection that we are all one in Him. I may be the foot, all dusty and travel-stained, and you may be the hand, holding forth some precious gem, but we are still one body. Yonder friend is the brow of holy thought and another is the lip of persuasion and a third is the eye of watchfulness, but still, we are one body in Christ. We cannot do, any one of us, without his fellow—each one ministers to the benefit of all. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you.” We are all one in Christ Jesus. Surely this ought to comfort those of you who, by reason of feebleness, are made to feel as if you were very inferior members of the body—you are still living members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ your Lord—and let this suffice you. One life is ours, one love is ours, one Heaven shall be ours in our one Savior!

David further *pleaded Free Grace*, for he said to them, “You shall not do so, my Brethren, with that which the Lord has given us.” He did not say, “With that which you have conquered and fairly earned in battle,” but, “that which the *Lord has given us.*” Look upon every blessing as a gift and you will not think any shut out from it, not even yourself! The gift of God is eternal life—why should you not have it? Deny not to anyone of your Brothers and Sisters any comfort of the Covenant of Grace. Think not of any man, “He ought not to have so much joy.” It is all of Free Grace and if Free Grace rules the hour, the least may have it as well as the greatest! If it is all of Free Grace, then, my poor struggling Brother, who can hardly feel assured that you are saved, yet if you are a Believer, you may claim every blessing of the Lord’s gracious Covenant! God freely gives to you as well as to me the provisions of His love—therefore let us be glad and not judge ourselves after the manner of the law of condemnation!

Then he pleaded *their needfulness*. He said, “These men abided by the stuff.” No army fights well when its camp is unguarded. It is a great thing for a Church to know that its stores are well guarded by a praying band. While some of us are teaching in the school or preaching in the street, we have great comfort in knowing that a certain number of our friends are praying for us. To me it is a boundless solace that I live in the prayers of thousands! I will not say which does the better service—the man that preaches, or the man that prays—but I know this, that we can do better without the voice that preaches than without the heart that prays. The petitions of our bed-ridden Sisters are the wealth of the Church! The kind of service which seems most commonplace among men is often the most precious unto God. Therefore, as for those who cannot come into the front places of warfare, deny them not seats of honor, since, after all, they may be doing the greater good. Remember the statute, “They shall part alike.”

Notice that David *adds to his pleading a statute*. I like to think of our great Commander, the Lord Jesus, making statutes. For whom does He legislate? For the first three? For the captains of thousands? No. He

makes a statute for those who are forced to stay at home because they are faint. Blessed be the name of our Lord Jesus! He is always looking to the interests of those who have nobody else to care for them! If you can look after your own cause, you may do so, but if you are so happy as to be weak in yourself, you shall be strong in Christ. Those who have Christ to care for them are better off than if they took care of themselves. He that can leave his concerns with Christ has left them in good hands. Vain is the help of self, but all-sufficient is the aid of Jesus!

To sum up what I mean—I believe the Lord will give to the sick and the suffering an equal reward with the active and energetic if they are equally concerned for His Glory. The Lord will also make a fair division to the obscure and unknown as well as to the renowned and honored if they are equally earnest. Oh, tell me not that she who rears her boy for Christ shall miss her reward from Him by whom an Apostle is recompensed! Tell me not that the woman who so conducts her household that her servants come to fear God, shall be forgotten in the day when the “Well done” are distributed to the faithful! Homely and unnoticed service shall have honor as surely as that with which the world is ringing!

Some of God’s people are illiterate and they have but little native talent. But if they serve the Lord as best they can, with all their heart, they shall take their part with those that are the most learned and accomplished! He that is faithful over a little shall have his full reward of Divine Grace. It is accepted according to what a man has. We may possess no more than two mites, but if we cast them into the treasury, our Lord will think much of them.

Some dear servants of God seem always to be defeated. They seem sent to a people whose hearts are made gross and their ears dull of hearing. Still, if they have truthfully proclaimed the Word of the Lord, their reward will not be according to their apparent success, but according to their fidelity.

Some saints are constitutionally depressed and sad. They are like certain lovely ferns which grow best under a constant drip. Well, well, the Lord will gather these beautiful ferns of the shade as well as the roses of the sun! They shall share His notice as much as the blazing sunflowers and the saddest shall rejoice with the gladdest. You Little-Faiths, you Dependancies, you Much-Afraids, you Feeble-Minds, you that sigh more than you sing, you that would but cannot, you that have a great heart for holiness but feel beaten back in your struggles, the Lord shall give you His love, His Grace, His favor, as surely as He gives it to those who can do great things in His name! Certain of you have but a scant experience of the higher joys and deeper insights of the Kingdom, and it may be that you are, in part, at fault because you are so backward. And yet, if true to your Lord, your infirmities shall not be reckoned as iniquities! If lawfully detained from the field of active labor, this statute stands fast forever, for

you as well as for others—"As his part is that goes down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarries by the stuff: they shall part alike."

IV. Now, fourthly, **FAINT ONES FIND JESUS TO BE THEIR GOOD LORD IN EVERY WAY.** Was He not a good Lord when He first took us into His army of salvation? What a curious crew they were that enlisted under David! "Everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him, and he became a captain over them." He was a captain of ragamuffins! But our Lord had not a better following. I was a poor wretch when I came to Christ. And I should not wonder if that word is near enough to the truth to describe *you*. I was a good-for-nothing, over head and ears in debt and without a penny to pay. I came to Jesus so utterly down at the heel, that no one else would have acknowledged me.

He might well have said—"No, I have not come to this—to march at the head of such vagrant beggars as these!" Yet He received us graciously, according to His promise, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Since then, how graciously has He borne with us! We are not among those self-praising ones who have worked such wonders of holiness. We mourn our shortcomings and transgressions and yet He has not cast away the people whom He did foreknow. When we look back upon our character as soldiers of Christ, we feel ashamed of ourselves and amazed at His Grace. If anybody had told us that we would have been such poor soldiers as we have been, we would not have believed them. We do not excuse ourselves—we are greatly grieved to have been such failures. Yet our gracious Lord has never turned us out of the ranks. He might have drummed us out of the regiment long ago, but here we are, still enrolled, upheld and smiled upon. What a captain we have! None can compare with Him for gentleness. He still acknowledges us and He declares, "They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels."

Brothers and Sisters, let us exalt the name of our Captain! There is none like He. We have been in distress—and He has been in distress with us. Ziklag smoked for Him as well as for us. In all their affliction, He was afflicted. Have you not found it so? When we have come to a great difficulty like the brook Besor, He has gently eased His commands and has not required of us what we were unable to yield. He has not made some of you pastors and teachers, for you could not have borne the burden. He has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. He has suited the march to the foot, or the foot to the march. How sweetly He has smiled on what we have done! Have you not wondered to see how He has accepted your works and your prayers? You have been startled to find that He answered your feeble petitions.

When you have spoken a word for Jesus and God has blessed it, why, you have thought, "Surely there is a mistake about this! How could my feeble words have a blessing on them?" Beloved, we follow a noble Prince. Jesus is the chief among 10,000 for tenderness as well as for everything

else. How tenderly considerate He is! How gentle and generous! He has never said a stinging word to us ever since we knew Him. He is that riches which has no sorrow added to it. He has rebuked us, but His rebukes have been like an excellent oil which has never broken our heads. When we have left Him, He has turned and looked upon us, and so He has cut us to the quick, but He has never wounded us with any sword except that which comes out of His mouth, whose edge is *love*. When He goes away from us, as David did from those 200 who could not keep up with him, yet He always comes back in mercy and salutes us with favor. We wonder to ourselves that we did not hold Him—and vow that we will never let Him go—but we wonder still more that He should come back so speedily, so heartily, leaping over the mountains, hastening like a roe or a young hart over the hills of division! Lo, He has come to us! He has come to us and He makes our hearts glad at His coming. Let us indulge our hearts, this morning, as we take our share in the precious spoil of His immeasurable love! He loves the great and the small with the same love—let us be joyful all round!

There is one choice thing which He will do, that should make us love Him beyond measure. David, after a while, went up to Hebron to be made king over Judah. Shall I read to you in the Second Book of Samuel, the second chapter and the 3rd verse? “And his men that were with him” (and among the rest, these weak ones who could not pass over the brook Besor), “and his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.” Yes, He will bring me up, even *me*! He will bring you up, you faintest and weakest of the band! There is a Hebron wherein Jesus reigns as anointed King and He will not be there and leave one of us behind! There is no Kingdom for Jesus without His brethren, no Heaven for Jesus without His disciples! His poor people who have been with Him in faintness and weariness shall be with Him in Glory, *and their households*. Hold on to that additional blessing! I pray you, hold on to it! Do not let slip those words—“*and their households*.” I fear we often lose a blessing on our households through clipping the promise. When the jailer asked what he must do to be saved, what was the answer? “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” You have heard that answer hundreds of times, have you not? Did you ever hear the rest of it? Why do preachers and quoters snip off corners from Gospel promises? It runs thus—“You shall be saved, *and your house*.”

Lay hold of that blessed enlargement of Grace, “and your house.” Why leave out the wives and the children? Will you let the Amalekites have them? Do not be satisfied without household salvation. Let us plead this Word of the Lord this morning—O You blessed David, whom we have desired to follow, who has helped us so graciously even unto this day, when You are in Your Kingdom, graciously remember us, and let it be said of us, “and David went up there, and his men that were with him David

brought up (they did not go up of themselves) every man with his household; and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron;” *“Every man with his household.”* I commend those words to your careful notice. Fathers, have you yet seen your children saved? Mothers, are all those daughters brought in yet? Never cease to pray until it is so, for this is the crown of it all, “Every man with his household.”

What I have to say lastly is this—how greatly I desire that you who are not yet enlisted in my Lord’s band would come to Him because you see what a kind and gracious Lord He is! Young men, if you could see our Captain, you would get down on your knees and beg Him to let you enter the ranks of those who follow Him! It is Heaven to serve Jesus. I am a recruiting sergeant and I would gladly find a few recruits at this moment. Every man must serve somebody—we have no choice as to that fact. Those who have no master are slaves to themselves. Depend upon it, you will either serve Satan or Christ, either self or the Savior! You will find sin, self, Satan and the world to be hard masters—but if you wear the livery of Christ, you will find Him so meek and lowly of heart that you will find rest unto your souls! He is the most magnanimous of captains! There never was His like among the choicest of princes!

He is always to be found in the thickest part of the battle. When the wind blows cold, He always takes the bleak side of the hill. The heaviest end of the Cross always lies on His shoulders. If He bids us carry a burden, He also carries it. If there is anything that is gracious, generous, kind and tender—yes lavish and super abundant in love—you always find it in Him! These 40 years and more have I served Him, blessed be His name! And I have had nothing but love from Him. I would be glad to continue yet another 40 years in the same dear service here below if it so pleased Him. His service is life, peace, joy! Oh, that you would enter in it at once! God help you to enlist under the banner of Jesus even this day! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Samuel 30.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—917, 731, 733.**

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ZIKLAG—OR DAVID ENCOURAGING HIMSELF IN GOD NO. 1606

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 26, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And David was greatly distressed; for the people spoke of stoning him because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters. But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.”

*“And David enquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them? And He answered him, Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all.”
1 Samuel 30:6, 8.*

WE ought to be deeply grateful to God for the Inspired history of the life of His servant, David. It was a great life, a vigorous life, a life spent in many positions and conditions. I almost rejoice that it was not a faultless life, for its failings and errors are instructive. It is the life of a man after God's own heart but still, the life of one who went astray, like a lost sheep and was recovered by the great Shepherd's Divine Grace. By this fact he comes all the nearer to us poor, faulty men and women. I would venture to apply to David the description which has been applied to the world's own poet—

*“A man so various, that
He seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome.”*

Each one may find something like himself in the long, eventful and checkered life of the son of Jesse. Among other things we learn this, that where there is faith there is sure to be trial, for David, though he trusted God so heartily, had good need of all the faith he possessed.

In his early days he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains by Saul and was constantly in jeopardy of his life. He had so choice a treasure of faith about him that Satan was forever trying to plunder him of it. Still, the worst trials that David suffered arose not out of his faith, but out of his *lack* of it. That which he did to avoid trouble brought him into deeper distress than ordinary Providences ever caused him. He left the country where he was so ill at ease, which was, nevertheless, Your land, O Emmanuel, and he went away into the land of the Philistines, there expecting to escape from further turmoil. In so doing he transgressed and fresh trials came upon him—trials of a worse kind than those which had happened to him from the hand of Saul!

Brothers and Sisters, the poet said—

*“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown,”*

and he spoke the truth, for, “in the world you shall have tribulation.” If you have faith, it must be tried and should that faith fail, you must be tried still more! There is no discharge from this war—difficulties must be faced. This is the day of battle and you must fight if you would reign. You are like men thrown into the sea—you must swim or drown! It is useless to expect ease where your Lord had none! If you adopt the paltry shifts suggested by unbelief, not even, then, shall you avoid affliction! The probabilities are that you will be taken among the thorns and scourged with the briars of the wilderness. However rough the king’s highway may be, the by-paths are far worse! Therefore keep the way of the commandment and bravely face its trials.

Another lesson is this—though we shall be tried, yet faith in God is an available resource at all times. Faith is a shield which you may use for warding off every kind of arrow, yes, even the fiery darts of the great enemy, for this shield cannot be penetrated even by javelins of fire. You cannot be cast into a condition in which faith shall not help you! There is a promise of God suitable for every state and God has wisdom and skill and love and faithfulness to deliver you out of every possible jeopardy! Therefore you have only to confide in God and deliverance is sure to come. Mainly note this, that even when your trouble has been brought upon you by your own fault, faith is still available. When your affliction is evidently a chastisement for grievous transgression, still trust in the Lord.

The Lord Jesus prayed for erring Peter that his faith might not fail him. His hope of recovery lay there, yet faith under a sense of guilt is one of those noble kinds of faith at which some are staggered. To my mind the faith of a saint is comparatively easy. It is the faith of a *sinner* that is difficult. When you know that you have walked uprightly before God and have not stained your garments, then you can trust Him without difficulty. But, oh, when you have stepped aside and when, at last, the heavenly Father makes you smart under His rod—to cast yourself upon Him, then, is faith, indeed! Do not fail to exercise it, for this is the faith which saves.

What faith is that which, first of all, brings men into possession of a good hope but the faith of a sinner? Often in life, when our sinnership becomes more manifest to us than usual, we shall be driven to that first sort of faith in which, being unworthy, we trust entirely in pardoning Grace. It would be always wise to live by this same faith! If any of you at this time are in great distress and are conscious that you richly deserve all your troubles because of your folly, still trust in the mercy of the Lord! Do not doubt the Lord your Savior, for He invites His backsliding children to return to Him! Though you have fallen by your iniquity, yet take with you words and return unto the Lord. May the Holy Spirit give you renewed trust in the Lord who forgives iniquity, transgression, sin and retains not His anger forever because He delights in mercy!

Let this stand as our preface and the whole of the sermon will tend to illustrate it. We notice first—David’s distress—“David was greatly distressed.” Secondly, David’s encouragement—“David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” Thirdly, David’s enquiry—“And David enquired of

the Lord.” And then, fourthly, David’s answer of peace—the Lord said, “Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.”

I. First, then, let us look at DAVID’S DISTRESS—“David was greatly distressed.” His city was burnt, his wives were gone, the sons and daughters of his comrades were all captive and little Ziklag, where they had made a home, smoked before them in blackened ruins. The men of war, wounded in heart, mutinied against their leader and were ready to stone him. David’s fortunes were at their lowest ebb. To understand his position we must go a little farther back in his history. David was greatly distressed for he had been acting without consulting his God. It was his general habit to wait upon the Lord for direction, for even as a shepherd lad it was his joy to sing, “He leads me.” But for once David had gone without leading and had chosen a bad road.

Worn out by the persecution of Saul, in an evil moment his heart failed him and he said, “I shall surely fall one day by the hands of Saul.” This was a dangerous mood. Always be afraid of being afraid! Failing faith means failing strength. Do not regard despondency as merely a loss of joy—view it as draining away your spiritual life. Struggle against it, for it often happens that when faith ebbs, sin comes to the flood. He who does not comfortably trust God will soon seek after comfort somewhere else and David did so. Without asking Divine direction, he fled to the court of the Philistine chieftain, Achish, hoping to be quiet there. See what came of it! When he stood among the ashes of Ziklag he began to understand what an evil and bitter thing it is to lean to our own understanding, to forget God who guides us and to become a law unto ourselves.

Perhaps some of you are in distress in the same way—you have chosen your own path and now you are caught in the tangled bushes which tear your flesh. You have carved for yourselves and you have cut your own fingers. You have obtained your heart’s desire and while the meat is yet in your mouth, a curse has come with it. You say you, “did it for the best.” Yes, but it has turned out to be for the worst! David never made a heavier rod for himself than when he thought to avoid all further discomfort by leaving his true place. Worse than this, if worse can be, David had also followed policy instead of truth. The Oriental mind was and probably still is, given to lying. Easterners do not think it wrong to tell an untruth—many do it habitually.

Just as an upright merchant in this country would not be suspected of a falsehood, so you would not in the olden time have suspected the average Oriental of *ever* speaking the truth if he could help it because he felt that everybody else would deceive *him* and so *he* must practice great cunning. The golden rule in David’s day was, “Do others, for others will certainly do you.” David, in his early days, was not without the taint of his times. He became the commander of the bodyguard of Achish, king of Gath, and he lived in the royal city. As he found himself rather awkwardly situated in that idolatrous town, he said to the king, “If I have now found favor in your eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there, for why should your servant dwell in the royal city with you?”

Achish appears to have been almost a convert to the worship of Jehovah and certainly shines brilliantly in the narrative before us. At David's request, he gave him the town of Ziklag. David and his men warred with the various tribes of Canaanites who dwelt in the south of Palestine and took from them great spoil. But he greatly erred in making Achish believe that he was fighting against Judah. We read, "And Achish believed David, saying, he has made his people, Israel, to utterly abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant forever." This was the result of David's acted and uttered lies and lest the falsehood should be found out, David spared none of those whom he conquered, saying, "Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David."

So beginning with policy, he went on to falsehood and from one falsehood he was driven to another. And so his course became far other than that which a man of God should have pursued. How different was such false conduct from the usual character of the man who said, "He that works deceit shall not dwell within my house. He that tells lies shall not tarry in my sight." See the fruit of his falsehood! Ziklag is burned with fire. His wives are captives and his men speak of stoning him! If you and I ever get away from living by straightforward truth, we shall wander into a maze from which it will be hard to extricate ourselves! We would each feel that we can *die* but we *cannot* lie—we can starve but we cannot cheat—we can be ground into the dust but we cannot do an unrighteous thing. If it is so, we may count upon the help of God and may go bravely on under every difficulty.

David had left the highway of righteousness and was stumbling among the dark mountains of craft and deceit. He was plotting and scheming like the worst of worldlings and he must be made to see his error and taught to abhor the way of lying. Therefore, in one moment, the Lord launches at him bereavement, plunder, mutiny, danger of life—that he might be driven to his God and made to hate the way of cunning. What wonder that David was greatly distressed? Yet was his distress the more severe on another account, for David had sided with the enemies of the Lord's people! He had gone to the Philistines and their prince had said to him, "I will make you keeper of my head, forever." Think of David protecting the head of a *Philistine*!

When Achish gathered the Philistine army to battle with Israel, we read with shame, "And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands: but David and his men passed on in the rear with Achish." How dreadfully troubled David must have felt in this false position! Think of David, who was ordained to be *king of Israel*, marching his armed band to fight his own countrymen. How gracious was the Lord in bringing him out of that perilous position! The Philistine princes suspected him, as well they might, and said to Achish, "Why are these Hebrews here?" They were jealous of the high office to which David had been promoted and fearful of his turning against them during the fight.

"And the princes of the Philistines were angry with Achish; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go, again, to his place which you have appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he become an adversary

to us: for with what should he reconcile himself unto his master? Should it not be with the heads of these men? Is not this David, of whom they sang, one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?" Though the Philistine king, like the true man that he was, smoothed it down, he was forced to send David away. What a relief David must have felt! Well might he pen the words of the 124th Psalm, "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken and we are escaped."

What a horror would have been upon him if he had actually gone with the Philistines to the battle in which Saul and Jonathan were slain! It would have been a stain upon David all his life. The Lord delivered him, but He made David feel His rod at the same time, for no sooner had David reached Ziklag than he saw that the hand of the Lord was gone out against him—desolation smoked around him and we do not marvel that David was greatly distressed! Picture the position of David, in the center of his army. He has been driven away by the Philistine lords with words of contempt. His men have been sneered at—"Why are these *Hebrews* here? Is not this David?"

When David walked with God, he was like a prince and no man dared to sneer at him, but now he has been flouted by the uncircumcised Philistines and has been glad to sneak back to his little city, ashamed of himself! It is terrible when a man of God falls into such a position that he gives the enemy opportunity to blaspheme God and to despise His servant. It is terrible when even *worldlings* tout the inconsistency of the professed follower of Jesus. "Why are these Hebrews here?" is the sarcastic question of the world. "Why is a professing Christian acting as *we* do? Look, He is trying to cultivate *our* acquaintance and pass for one of *us* and yet he calls himself a servant of God!" They begin to point, as they did at Peter—"You, also, were with Jesus of Nazareth, for your speech betrays you."

"What are you doing here, Elijah?" is the voice which comes from God's mouth and the lips of his adversaries repeat it. When the child of God feels that he is in that predicament and in great trouble, too, it is not strange that he is greatly distressed. At the back of this came bereavement. His wives were gone. He was a man of a large, affectionate, tender heart—what grief it must have been to him! Nor was he a solitary mourner, but all those brave fellows who were joined with him were bereaved, too. Listen to the common chorus of grief as they weep until they have no more power to weep! It must have been a dreadful day for their leader to feel his own personal sorrow merged and drowned in the flood of grief which swept over his companions.

As for his worldly possessions, he was now as poor as he possibly could be, for all that he had was taken away and his habitation was burnt with fire—and the rovers were gone, he knew not where. Worst of all, he was now forsaken by his followers. Those who had been with him in his worst fortunes now upbraided him with their calamity. Why did he leave the city to go off to help these enemies of the Lord, the uncircumcised Philistines? He should have known better and they grew indignant until, at last, one said, "Let us stone him!" To which others answered,

“Let us do it at once.” They were evidently in a great rage. David stands there faint with weeping, a friendless, forsaken man—with his very life in danger from furious mutineers!

Do you wonder that it is written, “And David was greatly distressed”? He is surrounded with sorrow, but he has no need to gather ashes as the emblems of his woe, for ashes are everywhere about him! The whole place is smoking! He mourns greatly for his wives and his soldiers mourn for their children, for they are as if they were slain with the sword. It is a case of deep distress—with this added sting—David had brought it upon himself! There is the picture before you. Now let us see a fairer scene as we observe what David did under the circumstances. When he was at his worst, by God’s Grace, he was seen at his best!

II. Secondly, let us consider DAVID’S ENCOURAGEMENT—“And David encouraged himself.” That is well, David! He did not, at first, attempt to encourage anybody else—he encouraged himself. Some of the best talks in the world are those which a man has with himself. He who speaks to everybody except himself is a great fool! I think I hear David say, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God, for I will yet praise Him.” David encouraged himself. But he encouraged himself, “in the Lord his God,” namely, in Jehovah. That is the surest way of encouraging yourself!

David might have drawn, if he had pleased, a measure of encouragement from those valiant men who joined him just about this particular time, for it happened, according to 1 Chronicles 12:19-20, that many united with his army at that hour. Let us read the passage. “And there fell some of Manasseh to David, when he came with the Philistines against Saul to battle, but they helped them not: for the lords of the Philistines upon advisement sent him away, saying, He will fall to his master Saul to the jeopardy of our heads. As he went to Ziklag, there fell to him of Manasseh, Adnah, and Jozabad, and Jediahel, and Michael, and Jozabad, and Elihu, and Zilthai, captains of the thousands that were of Manasseh. And they helped David against the army of the rovers: for they were all mighty men of valor, and were captains in the host. For at that time day by day there came to David to help him until it was a great host, like the host of God.”

These new comers had not lost their wives and children, for they had not been in Ziklag, but David did not look round to them and beg them to stand by him and put down the mutiny. No, he had, by this time, become sick of men and weary of trusting to himself! God was beginning to cure His servant by a bitter dose of distress and the evidence of the cure was that he did *not* encourage himself by his new friends, or by the hope of others coming, but he encouraged himself in the Lord, his God! Do you not feel a wind from the hills? The air blows strong and fresh from the everlasting mountains now that the man of God is looking to God, alone! Before, David was down there in the valleys with his policy and his craft—in the stagnant atmosphere of self-trust and worldliness—but now he stands in Ziklag, a friendless man, but free and true.

How grand he is amid the ruins! He rises to his full height while his fortunes fall! He reminds you of his youthful days when he said, “The

Lord that delivered me out of the paws of the lion and out of the paws of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hands of this Philistine.” He is no longer in bondage to craft, but he is a man, again, strong in the strength of God, for he casts himself away from all earthly trusts and encourages himself in the Lord! He did not sit down in sullen despair, nor did he think, as Saul did, of resorting to wrong means for help. No, he went, sinner as he was, confessing all his wrong doings, straight away to his God and asked for the priest to come that he might speak with him in the name of the Most High.

Brothers and Sisters, if you are in trouble, and your trouble is mixed with sin. If you have afflicted yourselves by your backsliding and perversities, nevertheless I pray you look nowhere else for help but to the God whom you have offended! When He lifts His arm, as it were, to execute vengeance, lay hold upon it and He will spare you. Does He not, Himself, say, “Let Him lay hold on My strength”? I remember old Master Quarles has a strange picture of one trying to strike another with a flail and how does the other escape? Why, he runs in and keeps close! And so he is not struck. It is the very thing to do! Close in with God! Cling to Him by faith! Hold fast to Him in hope! Say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” Resolve, “I will not let You go.” Guilty as you are, it is good for you to draw near to God!

Let us try to conceive of the way in which David would encourage himself in the Lord, his God. Standing amidst those ruins, he would say, “Yet the Lord does love me and I love Him. Though I have wandered, yet my heart cannot rest without Him. Though I have had but little fellowship with Him of late, yet He has not forgotten to be gracious, nor has He, in anger, shut up His heart of compassion.” He would look back upon those happy days when he kept sheep and sang Psalms unto the Lord his God amid the pastures of the wilderness. He would remember those peaceful hours of happiest communion and long to have them again.

His own Psalms would tend to comfort him as he saw how his heart had once been glad. He would say to himself, “My experience of Divine Love is not a dream, I know it is not a myth or a delusion. I have known the Lord and I have had near and dear communion with Him. And I know that He changes not and, therefore, He will help me. His mercy endures forever. He will put away my transgression.” Thus he encouraged himself in the Lord his God. Then he went further and argued, “Has not the Lord chosen me? Has He not ordained me to be king in Israel? Did He not send His Prophet, Samuel, who poured oil upon my head and said, ‘This is he’? Surely the Lord will not change His appointment, or suffer His Word to fail! I have been separated from my kinsfolk, hunted by Saul, driven from rock to cave and from cave to wilderness and I have known no rest—and all because I was ordained to be king in Saul’s place—surely the Lord will carry out His purpose and will set me on the throne. He has not chosen, ordained and anointed me in mockery.”

Brethren, do you need an interpretation of this parable? Can you not see its application to yourselves? Are you not saying, “The Lord called me, by His Grace. He brought me out from my love of the world and made me a priest and a king unto Himself—and can He leave me? Is not

the oil of His Spirit still upon me? Can He cast me off? He separated me to Himself and gave me to know that my destiny was not like that of the ungodly world, but that He had ordained me and chosen me to be His servant forever—will He leave me to perish? Shall His enemy rejoice over me?” Thus may you encourage yourself in God.

Then David would go over all the past deliverances which he had experienced. I see the picture which passed like a panorama before David’s eyes. He saw himself when he slew the lion and the bear. Did God deliver him *then* and will He not deliver Him *now*? He pictured himself going out to meet the giant Goliath, with nothing but a sling and a stone—and coming back with the monster’s head in his hand—and he argued, “Will He not rescue me now?” He saw himself in the courts of Saul when the mad king sought to pin him to the wall with a javelin and he barely escaped. He saw himself let down by the kindness of Michal from the window, when her father sought to slay him in his bed. He saw himself in the cave of Engedi and upon the tracks of the wild goats, pursued by his remorseless adversary, but always strangely guarded from his cruel hands. David cheers himself, as one had done before him, with the inference, “If the Lord had meant to destroy me, He would not have showed me such things as these.”

Come, now, dear children of God, take down your diaries and refer to the days when the Lord helped you again and again! How many times has He blessed you? You could not count them, for God has been so gracious and tender that He has aided you 10,000 times already! Has He changed in love, in faithfulness, in power? God forbid that we should indulge such a wicked thought! He is still the same and so let us encourage ourselves in Him. “Alas,” you say, “I have done wrong.” I know you have, but HE has not! If your confidence were in *yourself*, that wrong of yours might crush your hope. But since your confidence is in God and He has not changed, why should you fear? “Oh, but I am so sinful.” Yes, I know you are and so you were when He first looked upon you in love! If His love had sought to come to you by the way of *merit*, it never would have reached you. But it comes to you by way of free, rich, Sovereign Grace and, therefore, it will come to you forever!

Do you not feel refreshed, this morning, as you think of what the Lord has done? And do you not feel that after doing so much it would be wrong, now, to distrust Him? Will you not even, now, encourage yourself in your God? Perhaps David, at that moment, perceived that this crushing blow was sent in infinite tenderness to clean him right out of the condition into which he had fallen. The Lord seems to say to David, “All that you have ever got of Achish is this village of Ziklag. I have caused it to be burnt up so that you have nothing left to be a tie between you and Philistia. The princes said, ‘I send this fellow away,’ and they have sent you away. And now the town that Achish gave you is utterly destroyed—there is no link left between you and the Philistines—and you have come back to your natural standing.”

The hardest blow that our God ever strikes, if it puts us right and separates us from self and sin and carnal policy, is a blow of love! If it ends our life of selfishness and brings us back into the life of trust, it is a

blessed blow! When God blesses His people most, it is by terrible things in righteousness. He smote David to heal him. He fetched him out from the snare of the Philistine fowler and delivered him from the noisome pestilence of heathen association by a way that brought the tears into his eyes till he had no more power to weep. Now the servant of the Lord begins to see the wonderful hand of God and he shall yet say, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word." I, the preacher of this hour, beg to bear my little witness that the worst days I have ever had have turned out to be my best days! And when God has seemed most cruel to me, He has, then, been most kind!

If there is anything in this world for which I would bless Him more than for anything else, it is for pain and affliction. I am sure that in these things the richest, most tender love has been manifested towards me. I pray you, dear Friends, if you are, at this time, very low and greatly distressed, encourage yourselves in the abundant faithfulness of the God who hides Himself! Our Father's wagons rumble most heavily when they are bringing us the richest freight of the bullion of His Grace! Love letters from Heaven are often sent in black-edged envelopes. The cloud that is black with horror is big with mercy! We may not *ask* for trouble, but if we were wise we would look upon it as the shadow of an unusually great blessing! Dread the calm—it is often treacherous—and beneath its wings the pestilence is lurking. Fear not the storm—it brings healing in its wings and when Jesus is with you in the vessel—the tempest only hastens the ship to its desired haven.

Blessed be the Lord, whose way is in the whirlwind and who makes the clouds to be the dust of His feet. May some such thoughts as these help you to encourage yourself in God as David did.

III. And now, thirdly, we have DAVID ENQUIRING OF GOD. "And David enquired of the Lord, saying, 'Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them?'" Note well that as soon as David had come to be right with God, he longed to know the Lord's mind as to his next action. You and I would have said, "Let us hasten after these marauders! Let us not stop an instant—we can pray as we march, or at some other time. Haste! Haste! For the lives of our wives and children are at stake."

It was a time for hurry if ever there was, but, as the good proverb says, "Prayer and provender binder no man's journey," David wisely stops. "Bring here the ephod," he cries. And he waits till the oracle answers his enquiries. He will not march till the Lord shall give the word of command. This is well. It is a sweet frame of mind to be in to be brought to feel that you must wait the Lord's bidding, that your strength is to sit still till God bids you go forward. Oh that we could always keep up this submission of heart! Oh that we never leaned to our own understanding, but trusted solely in God! Observe that David takes it for granted that his God is going to help him. He only wants to know how it is to be done. "Shall I pursue? Shall I overtake?"

When you, my Brother, are enquiring of the Lord, do not approach Him as if He would not help you, or could hardly be expected to aid you. You would not like your children to ask a favor of you as if they were afraid of their lives to speak to you! I am sure you would not like a dear

child, whatever wrong he had been doing, to feel a suspicion of your love and doubt your willingness to help—for whatever he has done, he is still your child. David has encouraged himself in his God and he is sure that God is ready to save him—all that he wants to know is how he is, himself, to act in the business. It is to be remarked, however, that David does not expect that God is going to help him without his doing his part and doing it to the best of his ability.

David enquires, “Shall I pursue? Shall I overtake?” He means to be up and doing. Sad as he is, and faint as he is, he is ready for action. Many who get into trouble seem to expect an angel to come and lift them up by the hair of their heads. But angels have other matters in hand. The Lord generally helps us by enabling us to help ourselves and it is a way which does us doubly good. It was more for David’s benefit that he should, himself, smite the Amalekites than that God should hurl hailstones out of Heaven upon them and destroy them. David will have their spoil for the wages of battle and be rewarded for the forced march and the fight. Brother, you will have to work and labor to extricate yourself from debt and difficulty and so the Lord will hear your prayer. The rule is to trust in God to smite the Amalekites and then to march after them as if it all depended upon *yourself*.

There is a God-reliance which awakens all our self-reliance and yokes it to the chariot of Providence, making the man ready for action because God is with him. It is instructive to notice that although David was, thus, ready for action, trusting in God, he greatly distrusted his own wisdom, for he asked, “Shall I pursue them?” That man is wise who counts his own wisdom to be folly. And he who lays his judgment down at Jesus’ feet is a man of sound judgment! He who tarries till the Divine Wisdom shall guide him—he shall be expert and prudent in all things. David also distrusted his own strength, though quite ready to use what he had, for he said, “Shall I overtake?” Can my men march fast enough to overtake these robbers? And what a blessed state of heart that is when we have no strength of our own, but seek God!

It is good to be insufficient and to find God all-sufficient! I pause here a minute and pray God always to keep you and me in just the condition into which He brought His servant David. I do not care so much about David’s overtaking the robbers and all that—the glory was to have overtaken his God and to be waiting at His feet! He could not be brought to this without his city being burnt; without his being bereaved; robbed and ready to die at the hands of his own warriors! But it was worth all the cost to be brought to rest on the bare arm of God and to wait in childlike dependence at the great Father’s door!

Let the proud lift up their heads, but let me rest mine on Jesus’ bosom! Let the mighty raise their shields on high! As for me, the Lord is my shield and my defense and He alone! When I am weak, then I am strong. “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.” The old song of Hannah is still true—“He has showed strength with His arm. He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree.”

IV. We close our sermon with the fourth note, which is a note of jubilation and praise unto God who helped His servant—DAVID'S ANSWER OF PEACE. The Lord heard his supplication! David says, "In my distress I cried unto the Lord and He heard me." But mark this, he was not delivered without further trial. David marched with his 600 men on foot after the foe with all speed—and the men became so worn and weary that one-third of them could not ford the brook Besor which, though usually dry, was probably, at that time, flowing with a strong stream. Many a leader would have given up the chase with one out of three of his troop in the hospital, but David pursued with his reduced force!

When God means to bless us, He often takes away a part of the little strength we thought we had. We did not think our strength equal to the task and the Lord takes away a portion, even, of the little power we had! Our God does not fill, until He has emptied. Two hundred men must be torn away from David's side before God could give him victory, for He meant to have David's whole force to be exactly equal to the 400 Amalekites who fled, that he might make the victory the more memorable and renowned. Expect then, O troubled one, that you will be delivered, but know that your sorrow may yet deepen that you may have all the greater joy, by-and-by.

Leaving the 200 men behind, David dashes ahead and, by forced march, overtakes the enemy. He finds them feasting and smites them hip and thigh! He destroys them and takes the spoil, but in such a way that manifestly it was the gift of God. He speaks of the spoil as, "That which the Lord has given us, who has preserved us and delivered the company that came against us into our hands." God will help His servants who trust Him, but He will have all the honor of the victory! He will deliver them in such a way that they shall lift their Psalms and hymns unto God, alone, and this shall be the strain—"Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. We were unworthy, we were faint, we were distressed, but God has made us more than conquerors through His great love."

David's victory was *perfect*. We are told over and over again that David recovered all. "Nothing was lost"—not a piece of money nor a garment, not an ox nor a sheep, much less a child, or one of womankind—"David recovered all." How well the Lord works when He once lays His hands to it. "He will perfect that which concerns me." Salvation is of the Lord and it is an everlastingly complete salvation! Trust you in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. He will work and work perfectly till He shall say, "It is finished." The battle is the Lord's and His saints shall be more than conquerors!

Not only did God give David complete rescue, but He awarded him great spoil. "And they said, This is David's spoil." David became rich and able to send presents to his friends—but he was also the better man, the holier man, the stronger man, the more fit to wear that crown which was so soon to adorn his brow. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, the deeper your trouble, the louder will be your song if you can but trust in God and walk in fellowship with Jesus! Little skiffs that keep near the land carry but small cargoes and their masters see little but the shore. But they that go

down to the sea in ships that do business in great waters—these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep! It is something to be out on the wide ocean in a terrific storm, when the ship is tossed to and fro like a ball—when the heavens are mixed up with the ocean and all is uproar! Then great thunder contends with the roaring of the sea and the lightning flames are quenched by the boiling of the mighty waves!

When you reach the shore again, you know a gladness which the landsman cannot feel and you have a tale to tell to your children and your children's children, of what you have seen in the deep such as lubberly landsmen scarcely can understand! As for those who dwell at ease, what do they see? You who have been in the battle can sing of victory and, pointing to your experience, can exclaim, "This is David's spoil!" Trust in the Lord your God! Believe, also, in His Son Jesus! Get rid of sham faith and *really* believe! Get rid of a professional faith and trust in the Lord at all times about everything! "What, trust Him about pounds, shillings and pence?" Assuredly! I dread the faith that cannot trust God about bread and garments—it is a lying faith!

Depend upon it, that is not the solid, practical faith of Abraham who trusted God about his tents and his cattle—and about a wife for his son. That faith which made David trust God about the sons and daughters and the spoil—that is the sort of faith for you and for me! If God cannot be trusted about loaves and fishes, how shall He be trusted about the things of eternity and the glories which are yet to be revealed? Stay yourself on God with an everyday faith! Faith in God is the exercise of sanctified common sense! Somebody called me, "superstitious," for trusting God as to His answering prayer, but I reply that he is superstitious who does *not* trust the living God! He who believes in the power of the greatest of all forces and trusts in the surest of all truths is but acting rationally!

The purest reason approves reliance upon God! The end shall declare the wisdom of believing God! At the last, when we, with all Believers, shall lift up the great hallelujah unto the Lord God of Israel who reigns over all things for His people, it shall be known by all that faith is honorable and unbelief contemptible! God bless you, Brothers and Sisters, and if any of you have never trusted God at all, nor rested in His dear Son, may you be brought to do so at once! May you see your self-righteousness burned like Ziklag and all your carnal hopes carried away captive! And may you then encourage yourselves in Christ, for He will recover all for you and give you spoil, besides—and there shall be joy and rejoicing!

The Lord be with you. Amen.

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